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URN TO FAITH

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WILLIAM NORTH RICE



Rice

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# The Return to Faith

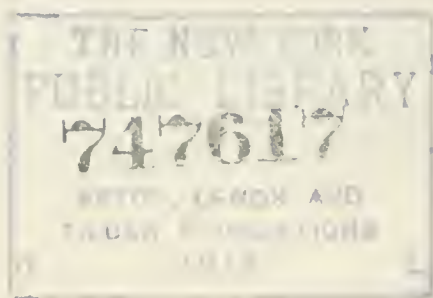
## and Other Addresses

By  
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TO HER

WHOSE SYMPATHY, COUNSEL, AND  
CRITICISM AIDED IN THESE AD-  
DRESSES, AS IN ALL MY WORK  
FOR MORE THAN TWOSCORE YEARS,  
AND THE MEMORY OF WHOSE UN-  
SELFISH LIFE IS TO ME AN ABIDING  
INSPIRATION. : : : : : :





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## PREFACE

THE addresses which form this little volume were prepared for various occasions, separated by considerable intervals of time. They have no mutual dependence or natural consecutive order. They have, nevertheless, a certain unity, in that from various sides they touch the great problem, whether, and by what adjustments, we may, in this age of science and critical investigation, hold fast the noble heritage of Christian faith which has come down to us from an age whose intellectual environment was so different from our own. That theme has been before me continually from the days of early manhood, and to it what I venture to regard as the best work of my life has been devoted.

A book wherein are reproduced utterances of various times and occasions, whatever other faults it may have, is sure to be marked by two defects. A certain amount of repetition in treating at different times the same

theme or closely related themes is unavoidable. As I have desired in this publication to preserve the various addresses in substantial integrity, I have not attempted to remove all passages involving repetition. Equally inevitable in such a book is a lack of perfect consistency. A mountain presents somewhat different aspects when seen from different points of view, through different atmospheres, and in different moods. There is an analogous variation in our views of truth. Only omniscience can be absolutely consistent. "For substance of doctrine," the five papers here collected represent what seems to me the best view of truth which I have attained. But I have not attempted to tone into perfect unison every expression or implication which may be found in them.

The first of these addresses, which gives the title to the book, was first prepared for the mid-year assembly of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the somewhat expanded form in which it is now published, it was included in a course of lectures on the Brooks Foun-

dation at Hamilton Theological Seminary in 1900. The address entitled, "The Alternative—Christianity or Agnosticism," was given on Matriculation Day, at the School of Theology of Boston University, October 12, 1887. The sermon on "The Vision of God" was the Baccalaureate Sermon at Wesleyan University, June 27, 1909; and the sermon on "The Influence of Science in Theology" was the University Sermon at Wesleyan University, June 20, 1915—the fiftieth anniversary of my own graduation. To me these two sermons have had a special interest as being a sort of summary of my teaching on the relations of science and religion, in a professorial career which has extended over almost a half-century and which must now be near its ending—in some sense an *apologia pro vita mea*. I venture to hope that they may be of interest to some of my former students whose friendly thought overlooks the limitations and imperfections of my work and lovingly remembers whatever in it was good.

It is proper to say that three of these



papers have been previously published, and to acknowledge with thanks the permission granted for their republication. The second, third, and fourth have been published respectively in *The Christian Advocate*, *Zion's Herald*, and the *Middletown Penny Press*. The third is also included in the collection of sermons published by Funk and Wagnalls under the title, *Modern Sermons by World Scholars*.

I desire also to acknowledge my obligation to my brother, the Rev. Charles Francis Rice, D.D., for assistance in reading the proofs and for critical suggestions.

WILLIAM NORTH RICE.



# I

## THE RETURN TO FAITH

I SHALL take as texts for the present discussion three passages from a book published near the close of the nineteenth century, bearing the title "Thoughts on Religion, by the Late George John Romanes, Edited by Charles Gore"—a book in regard to whose origin I shall have somewhat to say later. But first of all it may be well to answer the question, Who was Romanes, and why are his thoughts on religion of special interest to us?

Romanes was a boy about ten years old when the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* opened the modern phase of discussion of organic evolution. With the precocity which is sometimes, though by no means always, exhibited by men of exceptional intellectual power, he very early became one of the prominent expounders and

defenders of the doctrine of evolution. In some respects he occupied a unique position. He was the psychologist of evolution, making peculiarly his own the study of psychology from an evolutionary standpoint, as Alfred Russel Wallace made his own the evolutionary study of geographical distribution. When the defenders of evolution came to be divided more or less definitely into three parties in controversy with each other, the neo-Lamarckians assigning to natural selection a secondary and altogether subordinate role, while the Weismannians or ultra-Darwinians made natural selection the all in all of evolution, entirely repudiating any more direct effect of environment, Romanes became the leader of what might be called the orthodox Darwinian school, maintaining the dominant influence of natural selection, but attributing somewhat of influence to the environment. The argumentative writings of Romanes were marked by a peculiar clearness and incisiveness of thought. It would be, I think, no disparagement of any other of the great expounders and defenders

of evolution to speak of Romanes as the acutest logician among them all.

Romanes was brought up under Christian influences, and in his early life was a Christian. In 1873 he wrote a prize essay on "Christian Prayer Considered in Relation to the Belief that the Almighty Governs the World by General Laws." That essay was published in 1874. In the few years after the writing of that essay his theological opinions underwent a very rapid change, so that in 1876 he had reached the conclusion that there is no sufficient evidence to justify theistic belief. That conclusion was set forth in a book bearing the title "A Candid Examination of Theism, by Physicus." Though written in 1876, the book was not published until 1878. It was his intention that only a single edition of the book should be published, but as a result of some misunderstanding a second edition did actually appear. The book was published anonymously, in order that its arguments should receive in the mind of the reader no reinforcement from the reputation which the author had

already acquired. He felt bound to offer to the attention of thinking men the conclusions which he had reached, though with no desire to make converts. The refutation of his arguments would undoubtedly have pleased him far more than the acceptance of his conclusions. I know of no more pathetic passage in literature than the concluding paragraph of that work, in which is revealed the agony of the author's soul in the loss of the faith which once he had cherished:

“And now, in conclusion, I feel it is desirable to state that any antecedent bias with regard to theism which I individually possess is unquestionably on the side of traditional beliefs. It is, therefore, with the utmost sorrow that I find myself compelled to accept the conclusions here worked out; and nothing would have induced me to publish them, save the strength of my conviction that it is the duty of every member of society to give his fellows the benefit of his labors for whatever they may be worth. Just as I am confident that truth must in the end be the most profitable for the race, so I am



persuaded that every individual endeavor to attain it, provided only that such endeavor is unbiased and sincere, ought without hesitation to be made the common property of all men, no matter in what direction the results of its promulgation may appear to tend. And so far as the ruination of individual happiness is concerned, no one can have a more lively perception than myself of the possibly disastrous tendency of my work. So far as I am individually concerned, the result of this analysis has been to show that . . . . . it becomes my obvious duty to stifle all belief of the kind which I conceive to be the noblest, and to discipline my intellect with regard to this matter into an attitude of the purest skepticism. And forasmuch as I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm that the twilight doctrine of the 'new faith' is a desirable substitute for the waning splendor of 'the old,' I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the

precept to 'work while it is day' will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that 'the night cometh when no man can work,' yet when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it,—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible. For whether it be due to my intelligence not being sufficiently advanced to meet the requirements of the age, or whether it be due to the memory of those sacred associations which to me at least were the sweetest that life has given, I cannot but feel that for me, and for others who think as I do, there is a dreadful truth in those words of Hamilton,—Philosophy having become a meditation, not merely of death, but of annihilation, the precept '*Know thyself*' has become transformed into the terrific oracle to *Œdipus*—



Mayest thou ne'er know the truth of what thou art."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the next few years Romanes wrote some lectures and essays bearing more or less upon the theistic question, which revealed a gradual departure from the position represented by the *Candid Examination of Theism*. In the progress of his thought it is evident that the arguments in favor of theism came to be regarded as having a higher degree of validity than he had attributed to them in 1876, and the arguments against theism seemed less convincing. At the time of his death, in 1894, he had in contemplation a book which was intended to be in some sense a refutation of his own *Candid Examination of Theism*. It was his intention that the new work, like the old one, should be published anonymously. It was to have borne the title, "A *Candid Examination of Religion, by Metaphysicus*." Of the proposed work, however, only mere fragments had been written. In accordance with his desire, those fragmentary notes were

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<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion*, pp. 28, 29.

committed to his friend, Charles Gore, then Canon of Westminster, now Bishop of Oxford. After a careful examination of those notes Canon Gore wisely concluded that they ought to be published. He decided, therefore, to publish every one of the fragments that was sufficiently complete in itself to be intelligible. This was the origin of the book "Thoughts on Religion." In the editor's preface is quoted the concluding chapter of the *Candid Examination of Theism*, showing the author's state of mind at the time of the composition of that work. Then follow two essays on "The Influence of Science upon Religion," written during the interval between the publication of the *Candid Examination of Theism* and the author's death, but for some reason not published at the time. These two essays indicate clearly the transitional stage through which the mind of the author was passing in its gradual return to faith. Then follow those notes of the proposed "*Candid Examination of Religion*," which furnished the motive for the publication of the book which is before

us. The attitude of Romanes at the close of his life is set forth in a note by the editor, which forms the conclusion of the book:

“George Romanes came to recognize, as in these written notes so also in conversation, that it was ‘reasonable to be a Christian believer’ before the activity or habit of faith had been recovered. His life was cut short very soon after this point was reached; but it will surprise no one to learn that the writer of these ‘Thoughts’ returned before his death to that full, deliberate communion with the Church of Jesus Christ which he had for so many years been conscientiously compelled to forego. In his case the ‘pure in heart’ was after a long period of darkness allowed, in a measure before his death, to ‘see God.’

“*‘Fecisti nos ad te, Domine; et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.’*”

There come to the mind those noble lines in which Tennyson tells the story of the religious life of his beloved Hallam:

. . . . One indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

The story of Romanes is profoundly interesting in itself. The thoughtful mind cannot fail to be interested in the intellectual and spiritual biography of any soul, and particularly in the biography of a mind so keen and a heart so pure as belonged to Romanes. But his story has for us a yet deeper meaning as typical of the intellectual and religious life of the period in which he lived, the second half of the nineteenth century. In the splendor of his scientific achievement, in his loss of faith, in the moral earnestness and intense sincerity which he never lost, in the agony of spiritual longing, and in the light at evening time, the story of Romanes is the story of that great half-century with which his life was nearly coextensive. In the storm and stress of the philosophic discussions associated with the great scientific discoveries of evolution and conservation of energy, many a student abandoned



the faith of his fathers, and in later years gradually found his way back—not, indeed, to the faith as he had held it in childhood, but to a better and more intelligent faith. Many a student who never withdrew from the church and never definitively abandoned the belief in Christianity, felt his faith shaking in the crisis, and felt his faith reestablished in the calmer years that followed.

One more quotation from the *Thoughts on Religion* reveals to us somewhat more definitely the rationale of the loss and the recovery of faith. And not alone in the fact of loss and recovery of faith, but also in the reasons therefor, is the case of Romanes typical of the age in which he lived. We all doubted more or less for the same reasons which led Romanes to abandon his faith. We all found our doubts relieved by the same considerations by which his faith was restored.

“When I wrote the preceding treatise [the *Candid Examination*],<sup>1</sup> I did not suffi-

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<sup>1</sup>The words in brackets are explanatory notes added by the editor.

ciently appreciate the immense importance of *human* nature, as distinguished from physical nature, in any inquiry touching theism. But since then I have seriously studied anthropology (including the science of comparative religions), psychology, and metaphysics, with the result of clearly seeing that human nature is the most important part of nature as a whole whereby to investigate the theory of theism. This I ought to have anticipated on merely *a priori* grounds, and no doubt should have perceived, had I not been too much immersed in merely physical research.

“Moreover, in those days I took it for granted that Christianity was played out, and never considered it at all as having any rational bearing on the question of theism. And, though this was doubtless inexcusable, I still think that the rational standing of Christianity has materially improved since then. For then it seemed that Christianity was destined to succumb as a rational system before the double assault of Darwin from without and the negative school of criticism



from within. Not only the book of organic nature, but likewise its own sacred documents, seemed to be declaring against it. But now all this has been very materially changed. We have all more or less grown to see that Darwinism is like Copernicanism, etc., in this respect [that is, a theory which comes at first as a shock to the current teaching of Christianity, but is finally seen to be in no antagonism to its necessary principles]; while the outcome of the great textual battle [that is, the battle in regard to the Christian texts or documents] is impartially considered a signal victory for Christianity. Prior to the new [biblical] science, there was really no rational basis in thoughtful minds, either for the date of any one of the New Testament books, or, consequently, for the historical truth of any one of the events narrated in them. Gospels, Acts, and Epistles were all alike shrouded in this uncertainty. Hence the validity of the eighteenth-century skepticism. But now all this kind of skepticism has been rendered obsolete, and forever impossible; while the

certainty of enough of Saint Paul's writings for the practical purpose of displaying the belief of the apostles has been established, as well as the certainty of the publication of the Synoptics within the first century. An enormous gain has thus accrued to the objective evidences of Christianity. It is most important that the expert investigator should be exact, and, as in any other science, the lay public must take on authority as trustworthy only what both sides are agreed upon. But, as in any other science, experts are apt to lose sight of the importance of the main results agreed upon in their fighting over lesser points still in dispute. Now it is enough for us that the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians have been agreed upon as genuine, and that the same is true of the Synoptics so far as concerns the main doctrine of Christ himself."<sup>1</sup>

1. Romanes lost his faith by a too exclusive attention to the lower phases of nature,

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc cit.*, pp. 164-166.

to the inanimate world and the lower orders of life. He regained his faith by increased attention to those experiences which are peculiar to man.

The second half of the nineteenth century was preeminently characterized by the progress made in the sciences of nature. The outward and material life of man was transformed by the applications of science to the useful arts. Steam and electricity revolutionized the modes of transportation and the processes of manufacture. Aniline dyes gave to the fabrics employed for clothing and for decoration colors in comparison with which those of the rainbow are pale neutral tints. Anæsthetics and antiseptics in great degree freed the art of the surgeon from its pain and its peril. New measures of sanitation arrested the age-long massacre of the innocents, and added to the length as well as to the comfort of human life. But the material gifts of science are of far less value than the intellectual treasures which it bestowed upon humanity. The profound conception of the unity of nature, which had

been first suggested in Newton's great discovery of universal gravitation, came to its consummation in that great age of which we are speaking, in the discoveries of conservation of energy and of evolution.

No one can ignore the fact that man is a part of the system of nature, intimately related with the world of lower life. The possession and domination of the mind of the age by its new conception of the unity of nature led men to emphasize in thought the links which bind man to the lower world, and in greater or less degree to ignore those experiences of man which are peculiar and characteristic. Sometimes this tendency found even ludicrous forms of expression. A friend of mine who is a tremendous evolutionist habitually speaks of a man's assuming the erect posture as "getting up on his hind legs." Of course my friend's view of the homologies of vertebrate limbs is absolutely correct. Yet the form of language which he has used would pretty certainly not have been employed but for the tendency in thought of which I am speaking. In Eng-



land a few decades ago a work on natural history was in process of publication, in which each volume bore as a title the name of some particular group of organisms. The volume devoted to the Primates, an order which, as accepted by most zoologists, includes a wide range of forms—lemurs, monkeys, apes, and man—appeared with the short and startling title “Monkeys.” The clear recognition of correlation between psychological phenomena and cerebral changes and of the necessity of extending the doctrine of correlation of energy to cerebral changes, brought inevitably a tendency to ignore or deny the existence of anything in the psychological life of man which could not be formulated in terms of matter and energy. Hence came vague talk about thought as a secretion of the brain, or consciousness as a mode of motion. In this tendency to unify man and nature by ignoring whatever was peculiar to man the freedom of the will was inevitably repudiated. In denying or ignoring human personality the very foundation of ethics and religion was destroyed.

In time the pendulum began to swing in the other direction. There was a reaction from the tendency to effect a complete unification of man and nature by denying or ignoring whatever was peculiar to man. Men came to feel that a philosophic procedure which solves the problem of the universe only by an arbitrary simplification, in which part of the facts which demand explanation are suppressed, is essentially vicious. Raphael's "Transfiguration" and Milton's "Paradise Lost" would not be exhaustively inventoried if we could ascertain the exact number of calories of energy involved in the cerebral changes associated with their production. The heroism of the martyr is not the necessitated product of heredity and environment. When we come to our senses, we feel that the belief in our own personality, our own freedom of volition and consequent moral responsibility, however inexplicable it may be, is equally inexpugnable. The belief in personality and freedom compels the belief in duty, and so lays the foundation of ethics. The faith in



a personal man makes it easy to believe in a personal God. But it is not alone the individual experience of human life as revealed in each man's consciousness that suggests a faith in God. The collective experience of humanity bears a like testimony. The universality of religion among mankind is an immensely significant fact. It is not, indeed, a demonstration of the truth of theism, but it is a factor of great value in any just estimate of the probability of that doctrine. The God concealed in nature is revealed in man.

I found him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;  
Nor through the questions men may try,  
The pretty cobwebs we have spun.

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,  
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,  
And like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear:  
But that blind clamor made me wise;  
Then was I as a child that cries,  
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again  
What is, and no man understands;  
And out of darkness came the hands  
That reach through nature, molding man.

2. Romanes lost his faith by thinking that the implications of evolution were atheistic. He regained his faith by coming to a realization that the scientific conception of evolution involves no contradiction of theistic or Christian belief.

It is not strange that the doctrine of evolution, involving an explicit denial of creation in the sense in which that word had been commonly used, seemed at first sight to be absolutely destructive of theistic belief. But the experience of the sixteenth century was destined to repeat itself in the nineteenth. The Copernican astronomy seemed to many in its own time utterly fatal to a religion whose sacred writers evidently thought of the earth as the central and all-important

body of the universe, and thought of the celestial orbs as merely decorative appendages to the earth. But Christianity survived, though the sure and firm-set earth upon which it rested was knocked from under it. In like manner, before the close of the nineteenth century it had come to be widely recognized that the essential beliefs of Christianity could be adjusted to an evolutionary conception of the universe. It is, indeed, true that the philosophical and theological problems offered by evolution have not been completely solved. It must be the work of wiser generations than ours to work out a complete and consistent theistic evolutionary philosophy. But, if we are not able, as yet, to reach a complete solution, we can at least reach provisional and partial solutions of the problem which are sufficient to justify a faith that there is no hopeless and irreconcilable conflict between science and religion. We have reached a *modus vivendi* which will enable us to live in peace while surveys along the frontiers of science and religion are in progress.

Of course we do not believe in the “carpenter God” of the old popular theology—the God who built a universe as a man builds an elaborate machine, and then left it to run until it should run down or be wound up again, contemplating it from without, and occasionally interposing to alter its adjustments and make some change in its movements. But we can believe in a God

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

We can believe in a God in whom “we live, and move, and have our being.” The great truth of the divine immanence, the fundamental doctrine of any theistic evolutionary philosophy, expresses itself oftentimes in the language of pantheism. But there is a world-wide difference between what is ordinarily called pantheism, with its denial of personality alike in man and in God, and the philosophy which believes in the personality of God because it believes in the personality of man, and finds the ground of the uni-



formity of nature in personal will, eternally expressing eternal wisdom and eternal love.

Of course we do not believe in the inerrant Bible, but the Bible is no less truly the record of a divine revelation in Christ Jesus. We no longer mistake the Eden legend for history; but no less, through that allegorical or legendary form, we see shadowed forth the supreme ethical truth in the history of our race that sin—sin in the individual and sin transmitted by inheritance and by education from generation to generation—has been the one thing that has cursed mankind, robbing the race of its divine birthright, and preventing the fulfillment of its boundless potentialities of good. And thus we have learned to think of the redemptive work of Christ not as restoring to us an imaginary paradise that had been lost, but as enabling us to make actual a potential paradise that sin had forfeited.

We may be skeptical in regard to a dogmatic dualism that would ground our faith in ethics on the conception of an immaterial spirit, and ground our faith in immortality



on the supposed indivisibility and consequent indissolubility of that spirit. We have learned, rather, to ground our ethics on the necessary belief of the freedom and responsibility of the *ego*, whatever in essence that *ego* may be, and from whatever origin that *ego* may have been derived. We have come to ground our hope of immortality not on the supposed indivisible unity of the spirit, but on that boundless capacity for progress which characterizes humanity, and which makes us feel that the life that now is can be only an embryonic life demanding a larger life for its fulfillment.

3. Romanes lost his faith through the notion that the results of biblical criticism had so far discredited the traditional view of the date and authorship of the biblical writings as entirely to invalidate the conception of Christianity as a historic revelation. He regained his faith through the belief that the constructive results of biblical criticism had established the authenticity of enough of the New Testament documents to afford valid

evidence of the historical facts on which Christian faith is founded.

Certainly, the foundations of Christian faith are in a far better condition than they were a few decades ago, when the authenticity of all scriptural documents was traditionally accepted as an integral part of the faith itself, and when the investigation of critical questions was regarded as an act of impiety. Thank God that the spade and pickax have been at work around the foundations of our faith. If the excavation has shown the weakness and worthlessness of some of the supposed foundations of faith, it has revealed the substantial strength of others. What if the Pentateuch is composite? What if there were two Isaiahs? What if Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews? What if the so-called Second Epistle of Peter is a pseudonymous work of the second century? There is an immense significance in the unquestionable authenticity of the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and the Corinthians, and in the unquestionably early date of the Synoptic Gospels.

So much as is affirmed in the quotation from Romanes may be accepted as unquestionable. Considerably more than that, I believe, can be claimed as highly probable. In spite of all the difficulties which the Fourth Gospel presents, it seems to me that the belief that it was actually written by the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James, is far more probable than the belief that, after the Synoptic Gospels had come into general acceptance, there appeared some time in the second century a new and anonymous Gospel by an unknown author, contradicting in important particulars the statements of the Synoptic Gospels, and presenting a different view of the general scope of the teaching of the Master, and that the work of that unknown writer was at once accepted by the church throughout the Roman empire and placed on an equality with the Synoptics; more probable than that a book which bears so conspicuously on almost every page the characteristic marks of personal narrative should have been an elaborate forgery by an anonymous dreamer,



surpassing even DeFoe in the art of giving to the product of imagination the form and features of life.

But be that as it may. Enough to know that in its broader outlines the portrait of Jesus which stands before us in the New Testament is a contemporary portrait. So much is certified to us by the notarial seal of modern criticism. The Jesus whose unique character was an oasis of heaven in the sin-blasted desert of earth—teacher of a morality unapproached in its stern purity, yet friend of sinners; incarnation of self-sacrifice, yet free from taint of asceticism or stoicism; bearing in sympathetic woe the burden of the world's sin, yet making the wedding feast more gladsome by his presence, and condescending in his last agony to ask the faint alleviation of a drink to moisten his parched lips and tongue; brave, patient, tender to all; sympathizing with the sorrows of every human soul, though none could sympathize with him—that Jesus was no dream of tender, saintly souls when the simple outlines of history had grown dim

with the lapse of years, but was painted from life. And the story of the resurrection was no myth slowly developing itself after the generation to which the original companions of Jesus belonged had vanished from the earth. When we read in the First Epistle to the Corinthians "that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep; after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles,"—we have the tidings only second-hand from the eyewitnesses. With the recognition of the unquestionably contemporaneous date of much of the New Testament, Christ himself becomes the foundation of apologetics, as well as the central truth of dogma and the inspiration of Christian life.

I have twice quoted from "In Memoriam." The author of that matchless poem seems to me the prophet bard of that age of which we have been thinking. In his



writings, and most of all in that one poem, dating from the beginning of that half-century of agonizing doubt, of honest search for truth, of undying moral earnestness, and of faith at last triumphant, we have the spirit of the age uttering itself in sweetest music. In that return to faith which marks the close of the old century and the dawn of the new one, the prophet word finds its fulfillment.

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove!

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day, and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;  
We mock thee when we do not fear;  
But help thy foolish ones to bear;  
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

## II

THE ALTERNATIVE—CHRIS-  
TIANITY OR AGNOSTICISM

ADDRESS ON MATRICULATION DAY, SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY,  
OCTOBER 12, 1887

WHEN the mountain climber has ascended but a few hundred feet above the plain or valley in which he started, he often comes to some projecting ledge of rock from which a wide prospect opens before him. He almost seems to himself to have reached the summit, so wide, so grand is the view which presents itself to him. He thinks he sees objects in their true perspective, as they will appear when he reaches the summit. He turns reluctantly from the splendid prospect to follow the mountain path, which leads into the woods. He toils along, perhaps for hours, seeing nothing but the rough stones on which he treads and the thickets through which he

tears his way. The vision which he has enjoyed stays with him as a memory and a hope; but for the present it has vanished from his sight. At last he reaches the summit, and there flashes before his sight a picture—the same, yet not the same; a prospect larger in outline and truer in perspective, a prospect which he recognizes now to be far better than that which has haunted his memory through those hours of toil.

There is something analogous to this in the progress of the human mind. Observations of phenomena roughly put together by such laws as may first suggest themselves bring to the mind conceptions of beautiful generalizations, and the mind rejoices in the views of large and comprehensive truths which it seems to have gained. But, as knowledge advances, the evidence upon which those beautiful but premature generalizations rested is seen to be largely fallacious. The supposed facts which suggested them prove to be errors of observation, or the analogies on the strength of which they were inferred are seen to involve errors of



interpretation. It comes to be seen that, if those grand and high conceptions are to be maintained, it must be on other grounds than those on which they were first believed, and in other connections than those in which they first presented themselves. If they are to live, they must live by a resurrection, for now they are dead. At length some new discovery places things in new relations, and the long-discredited conception is vindicated and reestablished. The dead truth experiences a resurrection. Thus again and again it has happened in the progress of the individual mind and in the progress of the human mind collectively.

Let me give an illustration from the realm of physical science. Men scarcely open their eyes at all before they are struck with the resemblance between the fires which they kindle on the earth and that great fire which blazes in the sky and which gives perpetual light and heat to the earth; and no generalization seems more plausible, as none is more beautiful, than that which assumes an essential identity between the earthly fire and the

heavenly fire. That thought appears in many forms. In the old mythology it is the story of Prometheus. In a scientific or pseudo-scientific form it is the conception of the element of fire, one of the four elements of the ancient philosophers. But, as science grows, this magnificent generalization is seen to be based upon crude misconceptions, and the generalization itself, grand and beautiful as it is, vanishes from the realm of science and lives in poetry alone. The poet indeed continues to sing:

Rivers to the ocean run,  
Nor stay in all their course;  
Fire, ascending, seeks the sun;  
Both speed them to their source.

But only the poet recognizes the sun as the source of the earthly fires. The element of fire has vanished from science, and phlogiston and caloric in turn reign in its stead. The chemist and the astronomer go plodding their separate ways, each busied with his own special class of facts, knowing and caring very little about what the other is doing.

The chemist cares not what causes the heat of the sun, and the astronomer cares not what causes the heat of combustion. At length the time comes for the dead truth to rise again, not by the work of the astronomer, nor by that of the chemist, but by the conceptions that come from another field of science. In the light of the doctrines of modern physics, men come to see that it is the energy of the sun which tears apart the atoms of oxygen and carbon which exist in the atmosphere in combination as carbon dioxide, and thus allows the carbon atoms to be stored up in vegetable tissues; and that, when those atoms rush together again in combustion, they give back the equivalent of the energy by which they were torn asunder. Thus, in a new form, other and yet the same, the generalization of the oneness of the earthly fire and the heavenly fire comes back to us; and that which for generations has been only a poetic dream becomes the accepted truth of modern science.

What has happened in the world of science has happened also in the world of



religious thought. The first idea of causation is undoubtedly derived from man's own experience of volition. Man feels that he does do something himself, that he does produce movement; and thus he naturally jumps to the conclusion that all things which are moved around him must be moved by some cause analogous to that which he finds in his own will. He, accordingly, attributes all phenomena of nature to the action of a being or beings possessing attributes similar to those which consciousness reveals to him in his own mind. Most commonly this primitive idea of causation in nature takes the form of polytheism, and that form seems to me far more natural than that of monotheism. It is difficult to see how the idea of the unity of nature could present itself to the savage or unscientific mind. The different forces of nature seem to be at work independently and discordantly; and the most natural explanation would seem to be found in a plurality of deities. I hardly see how any philosophical thinker can explain the altogether exceptional monotheistic faith of



the Hebrew people—a people no farther advanced in the scientific view of nature than the polytheistic peoples around them—otherwise than in the belief that in some extraordinary way God did speak to that people, and reveal himself in his unity. But, be that as it may, the power that works in nature is conceived of in this stage of human thought as essentially human. It is conceived of as endowed with human faculties, sharing human feelings, and acted upon by the same motives which actuate men. Its favor is to be secured by entreaties or by gifts. Anthropomorphism is, then, the essential characteristic of the primitive faith in a personal God or in personal gods. But this anthropomorphism is sure to be discredited by the progress of science. The primitive faith begins to decay as soon as it is established. In fact, it never is established as a complete and universal explanation of the phenomena of nature. It was, I believe, Adam Smith who first called attention to the remarkable fact that the principle of weight or gravitation has never been deified.

There have been gods of sunshine and storm, gods of air and earth and sea, gods of life and death, but never a god of gravitation or weight; and the exception shows why the anthropomorphic faith is inevitably destined to vanish. The force of gravitation has never been personified, simply because, from the very beginning of observation of nature, that force has seemed to be so absolutely constant, so utterly unchanging. The power that brings the stone down to the earth is certainly something different from the power of the human will. But as men advance in the knowledge of nature they find that those things which have seemed lawless and capricious take their places under law as constant and unchanging as gravitation itself. They see that the movements of planets, the changes of seasons, the fluctuations of weather, the endless chemical metamorphoses of combination and decomposition, the growth and decay of living organisms, the evolution of the globe itself, are all controlled by laws as changeless as that by which the stone falls to the earth. They see that,

as there is no caprice, and therefore no manlike agency, in gravitation, there is no caprice, and therefore no manlike agency, in any other of the processes of nature. Thus the advance of science brings with it the loss of the anthropomorphic faith of early days.

Closely analogous is the history of another great doctrine of primitive religion. Very early in human experience comes the thought that there is something in man himself which is different from the material body that presents itself to the senses. The savage sees the image which looks up at him from the surface of still water, and the dark, mysterious shape which follows him wherever he goes; and there comes to him a vague sense of some element of his being more ethereal than the body. The body is stunned by a blow, or it falls in a fainting fit; there are the same flesh and bones, but something has gone—something spiritual, that made the body what it was. The savage sleeps, and in dreams he seems to leave the scenes around him, and to wander through regions which he has visited in the past or regions

which he knows only by imagination. And there come to him in dreams the shapes of those he has known on earth who have vanished from his bodily sight forever. So he comes to believe that this mysterious something, which is in the body yet not of the body, may survive when the body is dust, and may haunt the happy hunting-grounds when things of earth have vanished from his sight. But this primitive faith in immortality, like the primitive faith in personal deities, is destined to inevitable decay. The shadow and the reflection belong not to man alone, but to other things, and the animistic explanation gives place to one founded on the laws of optics. As men come to know more about the processes of their own bodies, it is seen that those things which were supposed to be unquestionable revelations of a spiritual substance are to be explained as exceptional or abnormal actions of the organism itself. Thus vanish the evidences of the primitive faith in immortality.

And yet, brethren, you and I are here to-day because we believe that there is essential



truth in these doctrines of primitive religion. We are here to-day because we believe that there is a personal God, who can be reached by our prayers and who is interested in our destiny, and because we believe that there is for each of us a personal immortality beyond the grave. What is it, then, I ask, which has restored to us in other form, and yet the same, those primitive beliefs which had vanished?

Has it been a more perfect science, a more accurate observation of physical phenomena, a more just classification of those phenomena? I answer, No. The progress of science is ambiguous in its bearings upon both these questions. The more we study nature, the more numerous and the more exquisite are the adaptations in detail which attract our attention, and the more magnificent the general conception of unity and harmony of law which presents itself to our thoughts; though the progress in these directions tends perhaps more to exalt our conception of the designer (if the existence of a designer is admitted) than to strengthen

the argument for the existence of a designer. On the other hand, the recognition of that law of continuity which binds all phenomena together, so that we recognize all nature as a continuous growth and development, compels us to conceive of the power in nature as a power that works upon nature from within rather than from without. There is, then, in the progress of science, a tendency, in one direction, toward a strengthening of the main natural argument for theism; a decided tendency in another direction toward pantheism. Equally ambiguous is the bearing of the progress of science upon the question of dualism or monism in human nature. The more clearly we come to recognize the essential unity of all physical phenomena, placing all physical changes under the category of motion and believing them all capable of formulation in terms of mass and velocity, the more we emphasize that utter and essential disparateness between physical changes and states of consciousness which is the strongest argument for dualism. On the other hand, the progress of biological science

is continually accumulating evidence of that inseparable connection between mental action and molecular changes in the brain, and of that gradual development of psychical function *pari passu* with the evolution of the nervous system, which are the main grounds of a belief in monism.

It is not, then, by a truer science that we have been able to restore the old faith. Is it by a profounder philosophy, by a more just interpretation of those common facts and phenomena which are within the scope of the knowledge of all men? I can readily believe that there has been a profounder philosophy in modern than in ancient times. The race probably advances, not only in acquired knowledge, but also in mental power. I can readily believe that modern philosophers have examined the great problems of existence with a logic more severe than that of Aristotle, an insight more subtle and spiritual than that of Plato. But, much as modern philosophy may have done, I do not believe that it is a profounder philosophy which has restored to us the lost faith.



No, brethren, you and I are here to-day not as theists, but as Christians; and in that name, which brings us together and which forms the bond of our brotherhood, we recognize the light which has restored to us in grander glory the vision of primeval faith. It is when we come to know Him who is at once our Brother and our Lord that we reach the mount of vision from which the old views come back to us in larger outlines and with truer perspective. It is the mysterious Person who lived in Palestine nineteen centuries ago that has changed the current of the world's thinking. That wondrous character, the glory and the paradox of human history; that Man who could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and could also say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and on whose lips those words so grotesquely incongruous on any other lips form a fabric as seamless as the robe which he wore; that man whose only written line was written on the sand (if the story of that sole instance of his writing be not apocryphal)—that Man has revolutionized



the world's philosophy as well as the world's history. We believe in God to-day because we believe in Christ. We believe in immortality to-day not because we find convincing evidence of the immateriality of the human soul. No; if we do believe in the immateriality of the soul, it is because that belief seems to furnish to us the most convenient explanation of that immortality our faith in which is largely due to the belief that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is, then, in Christ that these great primitive doctrines of religion, a personal God and a personal immortality, are restored to us.

There is a use for theistic philosophy which I would not undervalue. Of course, if the atheist could prove to us that there is no God, and if the materialist could prove to us that immortality is impossible, then should we be in no position to consider the credentials of Christ or to accept that gospel which he reveals to us. I am an exile in desert lands, and dim with years grows the memory of the father's house from which long ago I wandered. I know not even whether my

father yet lives. There is a possibility that he does live, perhaps a probability; but I see no way of converting that possibility into a certainty, or into any such approximation to certainty as will bring satisfaction to the mind. A messenger comes bringing what purports to be a letter from my father; and, inasmuch as I believe, on other grounds, that it is somewhat probable, or at least possible, that I have a father, I can examine the credentials of that messenger, and if his claims seem well authenticated I can accept his message. That letter is to me not only evidence of the particular matters to which it may relate, but it is the most convincing evidence of that which to me is more than any special contents of the letter can be—the fact that my father is yet alive. I need not interpret this parable of childish simplicity. Man knows not whether he has a heavenly Father or not. There comes one who claims to be a messenger from that heavenly Father. He presents his credentials and they appear satisfactory. His message becomes thenceforth not only

the evidence of the particular good which it may promise, but the strongest reason for the belief in the existence of the heavenly Father. Let us carry the parable a step further. My father's letter brings a promise of a gift most precious. If I were convinced that that gift was a thing impossible, I could not believe the promise; but if, on other grounds, I think there is a possibility that the gift may be mine, the letter converts a faith in the possibility of the gift into a faith in its reality. The message which Jesus brings us from the heavenly Father promises us immortality. If on philosophic grounds it appears that there is a possibility of immortality, then we may accept the promise of Jesus and believe in immortality as a reality. If the atheists and materialists had things all their own way, if they could prove that a personal God and personal immortality were impossible, there could be no such thing as Christianity. All that we need to ask of theistic philosophy is that it should show that a personal God and personal immortality are admissible hypotheses. This

at least it can do. Whether it be possible or not to prove the existence of God or personal immortality on philosophic grounds, it is at least possible to disprove the claim of the atheists and materialists that they have settled these questions in the negative.

How much more than this theistic philosophy is able to do I will not presume to decide. The force of arguments is not something which is purely objective. It depends in part on the capacities and the habitual modes of thought of the persons to whom the arguments are addressed. There are sounds which we cannot hear, not because they are too weak, but because they are pitched on too high a key, involving a vibration so rapid that the membranes of our ears cannot vibrate in unison with them. What is true of the physical is true also of the mental ear. I can well believe that a community of Platos and Lotzes, dwelling apart from sublunary cares, like the gods on Olympus, and feeding on the ambrosia and nectar of metaphysical speculation, might find profound satisfaction and rest



of soul in the refined and subtle arguments of theistic philosophy. But in the masses of mankind the membranes of the mental ear are too coarse to respond to vibrations so delicate. There are two classes of mankind, especially—the one important from the influence they are exerting, the other important from their immense number—of whom this is likely to be true. The students of physical science—the men of the telescope, the microscope, the scalpel, the hammer, and the crucible—accustomed to spend all their energies in devising more efficient means for the exact observation of physical phenomena and more intricate processes of mathematics for purely quantitative reasoning, are inclined to view with distrust all non-mathematical reasoning which goes far beyond very simple inductions from observed phenomena. These men are not to be very greatly influenced—not perhaps as greatly influenced as they ought to be—by the abstract speculations of theistic philosophy. The other and larger class consists of those who come in contact with physical laws, not in the way

of study, but in the way of hard and wasting toil for scanty sustenance—the men of the farm, the factory, and the mine—who, in the sweat of their faces, wring their daily bread from the hard and grudging hand of nature. These men will not be greatly moved by the refined arguments of theistic philosophy.

Whatever may be true of the elect few consecrated by inward prompting and outward opportunity to philosophic thought, the practical alternative for the masses of mankind is between Christianity and agnosticism, between a belief in a personal revelation in Christ Jesus and a belief which will narrow its horizon to the realm of physical laws. You have before you two creeds. There is that grand old faith—"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father

Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.”<sup>1</sup> There is one creed; and what is the other creed? “I believe that bodies attract each other with a force directly as the product of the masses and inversely as the square of the distance. I believe that in the transformation of energy the sum of kinetic and potential energy remains constant. I believe that all events in nature form a continuous evolutionary series.” There you have the two religious creeds between which we are to take our choice.

It is not in irony that I have called the latter a religious creed. Those of you who know the spirit of scientific men know that, in the intense and unselfish love of truth and in the solemn reverence with which they stand before nature and nature’s laws, there

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<sup>1</sup>The quotation of this time-hallowed formula as a symbol of Christian faith is not intended to imply that every clause in the creed, in the sense in which it was originally written, is an essential element in Christianity.



is something which it is not unreasonable to call a religion; and I do not believe that religion—the spirit of reverence and submission—would die if we should be compelled to limit our creed to a belief in gravitation, conservation of energy, and evolution. But how somber a religion! How devoid of cheerful hope and faith! It would be the religion of Mary in the garden—“They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” It would be the religion of poor Kingdon Clifford, seeing “the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven to light up a soulless earth,” feeling “with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead.”<sup>1</sup> There would be a sense of loss in all familiar things which might express itself in those words, among the sweetest and saddest of modern poetry:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

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<sup>1</sup> W. K. Clifford. Lectures and Essays, vol. 2, p. 247.



It is not now as it hath been of yore;  
Turn whereso'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,  
And lovely is the rose;  
The moon doth with delight  
Look round her when the heavens are bare;  
Waters on a starry night  
Are beautiful and fair;  
The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

And, if such would be the religion of the purer and nobler spirits—a religion almost destitute of cheerful faith and inspiring hope—what shall we say of the moral and spiritual life of the masses of mankind? A life cheered by no revelation of a heavenly Father, ennobled by no promise of redemption from sin, inspired by no hope of a better life beyond the grave; a life restrained from evil by no foreboding of retribution; a life destitute alike of the hopes and the fears which tend to make man something other than the helpless slave of brutal passion—no Dantean imagination would be needed to

give us a picture of hell, for hell would be around us.

I have set before you the two faiths, one or the other of which, it seems to me, must shape the thought and life of the present age, because I deem it important that you should rightly estimate the intellectual and moral conditions of that age in which you are called to act your part. In the providence of God you are called to cast the weight of your thought, your words, your lives, into the scale of those influences which are to maintain the faith in supernatural religion and save men from lapsing into theoretical or practical atheism. But how are you to do this? Not by preaching the refinements of theistic philosophy. That is too delicate food for the people to whom you will minister. They will not care for your arguments. It is rather disappointing to a man of intellectual training, when he comes out of the schools and mingles with men in the world, to find how small a part of men's beliefs are based on any intelligent reasons; how little of the skepticism he meets is any-

thing better than caprice, and how little of the faith is anything more than tradition. You are to do your work, not chiefly by marshaling the evidence of the historic facts upon which Christianity is based, and particularly the supreme fact of the Lord's resurrection. At the feet of the masters of philosophy and theology, before whom it is your privilege to sit, you are to learn those lines of argument. You are to master them for the guidance of your own thinking, and also that, in the rare cases when you do meet with some deep thinker who is struggling with the great problems of life and destiny, you may give him some little help; but the masses you are to meet in no such way. Your work is not to expound the evidences of Christianity. It is to make the evidences of Christianity.

There came, perhaps, a time in your own experience when conscience waked up to a new intensity, when you felt a strange burden upon your soul, and you cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And

then there came a time when you were translated from the seventh to the eighth chapter of Romans, and you gave thanks to God, for you felt that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You found, as some of earth's greatest thinkers have found, that the gospel found you. Or, if you can point to no such distinct epoch in your experience, you have yet to-day the deep conviction that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ meets the needs of your moral nature, and furnishes you with an inspiration which earth can neither give nor take away.

In joy of inward peace, or sense  
Of sorrow over sin,  
He is his own best evidence;  
His witness is within.

And not for signs in heaven above,  
Or earth below they look,  
Who know with John his smile of love,  
With Peter his rebuke.

And, as to the individual the strongest evidence of Christianity is that which comes by personal experience, so to the world at large the real evidence of Christianity to-day is a living, working church—a church radiant



with holy character, instinct with the life of Christian endeavor, leavening the whole lump of society around it by the all-pervading influence of goodness. That evidence of Christianity you are to make; and, as you go forth to the work, you are to go in a strength inspired by the promise of Christ, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Go, then, to do works greater than the works of the Master. Go to raise the dead conscience to life, to apply the healing balm of the gospel to the sin-sick soul. The speculations of theistic philosophy may be too fine for the common mind to appreciate. The historical evidences of Christianity grow dim with years as the original witnesses recede farther and farther into the shadows of the past. But the world beholds the daily miracle of souls dead in sin rising, by the power of Christ's resurrection, into the life of goodness; and, as in the ancient days, the multitudes glorify God who hath "given such power unto men."

## III

## THE ONE SAVING NAME

There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.—Acts iv. 12.

PETER and John had healed in the name of Jesus the impotent man who sat begging for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and Peter had improved the occasion to preach salvation through the name of Jesus with such effect that multitudes were added to the rapidly growing church. The hypocritical gang of Sadducean priests who had been in deepest degree responsible for the murder of Jesus, could not tolerate the progress of a sect the corner-stone of whose faith was a belief in his resurrection. They were ready to proceed to severe measures of persecution to prevent the apostles from the preaching of that hated name. Peter and John were called to answer for themselves

before the Sanhedrin, and Peter again improved the occasion to proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus. He hurled defiance in the very faces of the murderers of his Master, in the words, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *whom ye crucified*, . . . even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." He anticipated the obvious objection that the man who had been rejected by the religious leaders of the chosen people could not be the true Messiah, and answered it by an allusion to the familiar words of the 118th Psalm: "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." That psalm was perhaps written for the dedication of the second temple. If not written just at that time, it was undoubtedly used in the services of the second temple not long thereafter. It doubtless refers to some actual incident in the construction of that temple of which we have no other record. The words had doubtless already become proverbial. Jesus had

applied those words to himself, and, indeed, they found in him their supreme fulfillment. Yet has it been true again and again in God's progressive revelation that "the stone which the builders refused" has "become the headstone of the corner." Again and again the most important disclosures of divine truth have come from the teachings of those who were despised and rejected of men. Claiming that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah, in whom the prophetic hope of Israel found its fulfillment, Peter declared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And to the demand that thenceforth they should not speak nor teach in the name of Jesus, the apostles answered, in language worthy to be the watchword of reformers and confessors and martyrs—of all those in every age who have the courage of their convictions and are loyal to the truth that has been revealed to them—"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For



we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

The dogmatic interpreters have perverted our text, as they have perverted so many passages of Scripture, and have found in it the doctrine that all except those who have cherished a personal faith in Christ Jesus, conceived either as a historic fact or as a prophetic expectation, are doomed to an eternity of hopeless misery. I do not believe that any such doctrine is taught in our text, or anywhere else in the Bible. If we get to heaven ourselves, we shall doubtless find there many who on earth never heard of the name of Jesus. Such men as Socrates, Zoroaster, and Buddha, as truly as the saints of the Jewish and the Christian world, we may expect to find among our companions. Indeed, the words “saved” and “salvation,” as used by Peter on this occasion, had no direct reference to the future life. The salvation of which he spoke is the Messianic salvation foretold by the Hebrew prophets. As Jesus was the true Messiah, the promised restoration of Israel must come through him.

We must remember that when Peter spoke these words he was still a Jew. In common with his fellow-disciples, he still cherished the expectation of a restoration of the Jewish theocracy. All nations, indeed, were to be blessed through Christ, the seed of Abraham; but they were to attain this blessing only by becoming incorporated with the chosen people. Slowly did the Christian church outgrow its primitive Jewish conceptions. Not until Jerusalem itself went down in fire and blood did the Christian Church really learn that Christianity is not a national but a universal religion.

But with these expectations of national restoration there mingled in the mind of Peter other ideas more truly Christian. He had heard the Master say something about a kingdom of God that cometh not with observation—a kingdom of God that is within us. He had felt in his own soul the stirring of a new spiritual life, as he had passed from the dull formality of Judaism into the intense vitality of Christian faith. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus

had so taken possession of his soul that all other motives were dwarfed into nothingness in comparison with the supreme motive of loyalty to the Friend who had died for him, and for whom he would gladly die. The new spiritual life which he felt in his own soul he saw manifested in the lives of his fellow-disciples. It flamed forth in the fire-tongues of Pentecost; it showed itself in the fraternal affection which bound the disciples together as a loving family. For Peter and for his brethren the inspiration which glorified their daily life was in the name of Jesus, and in that name alone. In that sense the words have come down to us, as true to-day as when they were first uttered. The inspiration for the noblest development of character in individual and in social life comes from the name of Jesus.

There is a notion somewhat widely diffused that Christ and Christianity have done their work; that they were factors of some importance in the development of that commonwealth of nations which we call Christendom, that type of social and public life which

we call Christian civilization; but that a world which has already achieved Christendom and Christian civilization, no longer needs Christ and Christianity. This general notion is held by different people in different ways. There are some who utterly repudiate the supernatural claims of Christ. To them the Jesus of the Gospels is an amiable enthusiast, generally self-deceived in his assertion of supernatural claims, but occasionally stooping to the baseness of conscious fraud. His miracles and his resurrection these men relegate to the same category with the myths and legends of paganism. And in their thought the Christian Church has fulfilled its mission. In an old savage age it was of some use in softening the manners of men, but it has survived its usefulness, and the sooner it vanishes into the limbo of obsolete institutions the better. Others there are who do not so much deny as ignore the supernatural claims of Jesus. They believe the church may still be useful, provided it will not insist on being too religious. It makes a convenient meeting place for people



of noble aspirations; it is a very convenient agency for the administration of charity. These men accordingly maintain a more or less close alliance with the church. Many of them have their names enrolled as nominal members of some branch of the church; they contribute money for its support; habitually, or at least occasionally, they attend its services, though they value the preaching in inverse ratio to the emphasis which is laid upon the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Still others there are who have never definitely formulated even to themselves their disbelief or their doubt, but who have a vague feeling that, in this age when Christendom and Christian civilization are accomplished facts, it makes very little difference what people believe about Jesus Christ.

I have heard of a debating society in which was discussed the question whether the sun or the moon was the more useful to mankind. One of the champions of the moon argued that that luminary was far more useful than the sun, because the moon shines in the night when its light is needed, while

the sun only shines in the daytime when it is light enough anyway. We laugh at the ignorance of the youngster who did not know that all the varied lights that make the beauty and gladness of the world—the azure of the sky, the deep and solemn blue of the ocean, the flower-flecked green of the meadow, the virgin whiteness of the mountain snows—are only so many reflections of the beams of that sun whose light is the life of the world. But I cannot help thinking that those men make a somewhat similar mistake who imagine that we can have Christendom and Christian civilization without Christian faith and Christian life.

In maintaining, in opposition to all such phases of thought, the truth of Peter's declaration in our text, I wish to call your attention to two propositions: (1) The religious ideas which possess transcendent moral power are those which are connected with the name of Jesus. (2) In the life of the individual and in the collective life of the race, the inspiration for those reforms which are most radical, most fruitful, and most

permanent, comes from moral and religious ideas.

1. *The religious ideas which possess transcendent moral power are those which are connected with the name of Jesus.*

I do not ignore the truth, the religious truth, which lies outside the pale of Christianity. God has not left himself without witness in any land or in any time. In all the history of our race he has been the God, not of the Jew alone, but also of the Gentile. In many a land and in many a time he has raised up teachers of truth and righteousness. Only with profound respect can the thoughtful mind contemplate any system of religious belief which has prevailed among men. There is no doctrine so absurd, no rite so fantastic, so cruel, so obscene, but that in it we behold a symbol of some great truth relating to the mysteries of the unseen world. But, while there is religious truth outside the pale of Christianity, it is no less true that the truth revealed in Christ Jesus transcends all other truth in moral power.



I stand in a universe of cosmic forces, vast, measureless, resistless. I feel myself helplessly ground between the iron wheels of a vast machine. Is that machinery of nature as soulless and pitiless as it seems? or is there a spirit in the wheels—a soul of divine pity and love behind the awful manifestation of resistless power? But my puzzled despair in the contemplation of nature comes not alone from the fact that nature seems pitiless and cruel; yet more from the fact that nature seems utterly unmoral—utterly indifferent to the distinctions of good and evil in human life. The sun shines alike on the evil and on the good; the rain falls alike on the just and on the unjust. And the stern and terrible ministries of nature seem as indifferent as the mild and gentle ones to human virtue and human sin. When the avalanche hurls itself down the mountain side, it asks no questions in regard to the moral character of the people in its way. When the volcano's blast of scalding steam transforms in one moment a populous city into a city of the dead, the volcano pauses



not to count whether there be in that city five or ten righteous men. Is there any moral significance about this world into which we have somehow happened to be born? I turn from the dark, impenetrable mystery of nature to gaze upon Him who could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and from him I learn that wealth of meaning of law and love in eternal union, embodied in the phrase which has been on our lips since earliest infancy, but which we have so slowly come to understand—"Our Father who art in heaven."

I look into my own life. I find instincts, desires, passions, which clamor for gratification regardless of the welfare, the feelings, the rights, of my neighbor. Somehow I cannot help feeling, though I know not why, that altruism is better than egoism, that self-denial is nobler than selfishness. But, alas! the selfish life is easier; and again and again I find myself lapsing into acts of self-indulgence by which my neighbor is wronged or ruined. I cry in my despair, "The good that I would I do not: but the

evil which I would not, that I do." Shall I keep up the hopeless struggle? or shall I formulate my despair into an accursed philosophy, and declare myself only the helpless creature of heredity and environment, and, having in my creed made myself a beast, shall I live the life of the beast that I have made myself? I gaze on the Victim of Calvary, and the struggle in my own heart takes on a new meaning. Beholding that revelation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, I can no longer think of abandoning the conflict with selfish passion. And the struggle seems no longer hopeless; in that revelation of divine love in sympathy with sinful man there comes into my soul new hope and courage.

I stand in a world of the dying. Day by day some hand that I have loved to grasp drops from my grasp forever. Day by day some voice that has been the music of my soul is hushed in the eternal silence. Nor is it alone the dying of others around me that tells me that I am in a world of death. The warnings of mortality come with in-

creasing clearness in my own body. The hair grows thin and white, the eye and ear grow less keen, the limbs less strong, the head less steady. I am in a world of the dying; I am a dying man myself. I was born like a beast, I have been nourished like a beast, I must die like a beast—and what beyond? Vainly I strive to peer beyond that veil of mystery and terror. And what matters the question of moral good and evil in our lives, if virtue and sin are only figures in the endless dance of atoms,—if our human life is only a transient episode marking a particular stage in the evolution of a nebula? I go to the empty sepulcher on the Easter morning, and our human life grows great with the power of an endless life.

The heavenly Father, the divine love revealed in self-sacrifice, life and immortality brought to light—these are the religious ideas which are bound up in the name of Jesus; and in these is transcendent moral power.



2. *In the life of the individual and in the collective life of the race, the inspiration for those reforms which are most radical, most fruitful, and most permanent comes from moral and religious ideas.*

For what is the one great evil that curses human life? Is it dirt, or poverty, or ignorance, or any other external condition? No, no. The one dreadful disease which blasts our whole race with its terrible contagion is sin. Dirt and poverty and ignorance, and the manifold external ills of humanity, are in large degree symptoms of that one all-pervading, all-corrupting disease. I do not undervalue the merely palliative treatment by which we may relieve these external ills. Cleanliness is better than dirt, comfort is better than poverty, and knowledge is better than ignorance; and it is worth while to work to get the community cleaned up, and properly fed and housed, and educated. But, after all, there is nothing that cures the real disease in every human life that does not address itself to the conscience and work a transformation of character. The one great



question in your life and mine is: What is the supreme purpose for which we are living? Is it selfishness—self-indulgence, in some form, I care not very much how gross or how refined? Or is it loyalty to some ideal above self? A dirty and ignorant saint is far better than a clean and intelligent sinner. Where the purpose of supreme loyalty to righteousness is established in the soul, it gradually transforms all phases of conduct and transfigures the whole nature with its own glory.

As no genuine reformation of individual life comes otherwise than from the inspiration of moral and religious ideas, so are those ideas the source of the noblest and best reforms in society. I do not claim that all the good in modern civilization is due to influences distinctively Christian. Doubtless many valuable reforms have been advocated, and successfully advocated, on economic or on sanitary grounds; but he must be willfully blind to the records of history who fails to recognize that, among all the influences which have created Christian civi-

lization, Christianity itself has been transcendent. It is through the fatherhood of God that we reach the conception of the brotherhood of man. It is the conception of the supreme dignity of the human soul, as made in the image of God and redeemed by the grace of Christ, that has inspired the philanthropies of modern civilization, uplifted woman from the degradation of ages, broken the fetters of the slave, compelled the world's rulers to acknowledge that governments exist for the welfare of the governed, and bound the nations together in the great commonwealth of Christendom. The philanthropies that have glorified our modern history would die of inanition without Christian faith.

Aye, and there are dark shadows in the picture of our modern civilization. Do you dare to look squarely at them? Behold a school of literature whose formulated and boasted *unmorality* is essential *immorality*. Behold a school of art whose only ideal is the meaningless and shameless display of nakedness. Behold our fashionable society

mocking the misery of the poor with balls and banquets whose tasteless and ostentatious extravagance recalls the worst days of the Roman empire. Behold the greed of giant corporations, degrading the workingman by wages below the standard of self-respecting life, robbing the consumer by factitious prices, corrupting courts and legislatures, and in the insolence of their power trampling upon the laws of God and man. Behold a gigantic monopoly taking the opportunity afforded by a coal famine to raise the price of oil, and distributing fabulous dividends, while poor sewing girls turned down the wicks of their little stoves to save the few cents which stood between them and starvation or ruin. Behold the slaves of our industrial system turning now and then against their oppressors, in Haymarket massacres, and Homestead riots, and colossal strikes paralyzing the business of a continent. Behold our great metropolis falling again and again into the clutches of a gang of men who were in politics for what they could make out of the plunder of society



and the blackmailing of protected vice. Behold the insolent domination of the saloon power. Behold the hideous barbarity of Negro lynchings, North, alas! as well as South. Do you realize that the horrors of the Paris Commune belong not to some "old, unhappy, far-off" time, but to the last third of the boasted nineteenth century of Christian civilization?<sup>1</sup> And not in the worst of these things do we see what our civilization might be without religious faith. It is an acute remark of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen: "We cannot judge of the effects of atheism from the conduct of persons who have been educated as believers in God, and in the midst of a nation which believes in God. If we should ever see a generation of men to whom the word God has no meaning at all, we should get a light on the subject which might be lurid enough."<sup>2</sup> You may

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<sup>1</sup> If this address had been written within the last two years, this catalogue of horrors would have found a climax in the spectacle of the nation which claims (and, in some respects, justly) the highest civilization in the world, involving three continents in a war for its own aggrandizement, and conducting the war with a barbarous disregard of the rights of neutrals and noncombatants unparalleled in recent history.

<sup>2</sup> Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, p. 307.



plant the slopes of a volcano with vineyards and gardens, but the volcanic fires are there. Our Christendom without Christianity would be but a vine-clad volcano.

I am no pessimist. I am not out of sympathy with the age in which we live. I thank God for the privilege of bearing some humble share in its intellectual, its social, its political life. I glory in the solemn thoughtfulness of its better literature; in the fearless sincerity of its scientific investigation; in its applications of science to human comfort and well-being—its anesthetics and antiseptics, its miracles of steam and electricity; in its restless spirit of adventure and discovery, which has well-nigh erased the words “unexplored region” from the map of the globe; in its manifold philanthropies; in its political reforms, its emancipation of oppressed races and nations, its embodiment of the idea of human brotherhood in democratic institutions. From the depths of my soul I reverence those men and women whose names are the symbols of the work which our age has accomplished

for the uplifting of mankind—its Tennyson and its George Eliot, its Darwin and its Helmholtz, its Pasteur and its Lister, its Watt and its Morse, its Livingstone and its Nansen, its Lincoln and its Gladstone.

But there is one “name which is above every name,” and that is not the name of any of the men who have made the nineteenth century illustrious. It is the name of a Galilean peasant of the long ago—the name that Peter hurled in defiance in the faces of his murderers. And what did he do to gain that name above every name? He published no book; the only line we hear of his writing was written on the sand. He made no scientific discovery; he told his followers, indeed, to consider the lilies of the field, but he evidently neither knew nor cared anything about their botanical classification. He invented no labor-saving machine; he achieved no scheme of public sanitation; he organized no political party; he wrought no revolution in political institutions. What did he do? He went about doing good. Disease fled from his healing

touch, and the wild ravings of the maniac grew still like the waves of Galilee. He always had time to take in his arms any baby whose mother's heart craved a word of blessing. What did he? Nay, rather, what was he? He walked this sin-cursed earth, the one white-robed embodiment of perfect goodness. Goodness streamed out of him, as the radiant energy of heat and light streams out of the sun. In his presence haughty self-righteousness was abashed into humility, and soul-withering remorse dissolved in tears of penitence. Already is his name the name above every name? How will it look to us when we look at our earthly life from the standpoint of some other world? We stand in the narrow, crowded streets of modern Rome, and the great dome of Saint Peter's seems only a little larger than a dozen other domes. We wander off mile after mile over the Campagna, and those other domes sink out of sight, while the monster of Michael Angelo soars up in mountain majesty. So, when we look at human life from some other sphere, that



name which seems even now the name above every name will rise into a majesty beyond all earthly thought. Then those lives will seem to us the greatest which have accomplished great achievements in literature, science, politics? No, no. Those lives will then seem the greatest which have come nearest to the life of Jesus in the spirit of self-forgetful love. As our estimate of the relative value of different lives will change, so will change our estimate of the relative value of different actions in our own lives and in the lives of others. The simple word of counsel or of warning, the tear of sympathy in the eye, the warm pressure of the hand, the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, will seem to us greater things than the composing of a masterpiece of literature, the discovery of a law of nature, the invention of a machine that shall revolutionize industrial life, or the achievement of a great political reform.

O brethren, whatever else we may be or fail to be, let us be religious! Whatever else we may do or fail to do, let us walk in



the footsteps of Jesus! To one whose feet are treading already the downward slope of life, the sight of a congregation composed largely of younger people brings the pathetic thought of the disappointments that must be in store in the happiest life.

The best laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft agley.

The dreams of youthful ambition must fade as the sunset gold and purple fade into the blackness of night. But there is one aspiration that will bring no disappointment; there is one endeavor the joy of whose triumph will never cloy. Walk with Jesus, and on your path will shine a fadeless light, the dawn of an eternal day. Walk with Jesus, and in your hearts, amid all earthly turmoil, will reign the peace that Jesus giveth "not as the world giveth."

## IV

## THE VISION OF GOD

BACCALAUREATE SERMON, WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY, JUNE 27, 1909

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.—Matt. v. 8.

THE teaching of Jesus is innocent of any technical philosophical formulas, yet it is profoundly philosophical. In the simple words of our text is expressed the deepest law of the moral universe. Purity of heart and the seeing of God bear to each other a mutual relation of cause and effect. Purity of heart makes possible the vision of God, and the vision of God leads the soul into a higher purity.

The pure in heart shall see God—in the material universe. Whatever natural phenomena may attract their attention, they will look through nature up to nature's God.

And this will be true whether they look at nature with the naked eye of ignorance or with the microscopic and telescopic vision of science. The stars may be lamps hung to the roof of a great tent overarching the flat earth, or they may be vast spheres moving in measureless orbits at distances far beyond our ken. In either case, to the pure in heart "the heavens declare the glory of God."

For science neither proves nor disproves the existence of God. It was one of the delusions of my boyhood that the science of geology, if not affording an absolute logical demonstration of the existence of God, at least afforded what was substantially equivalent to such a demonstration, forcing atheism into a position so unreasonable as to be virtually absurd. In the first half of the nineteenth century Thomas Chalmers had treated the subject of natural theology in a method which profoundly influenced the religious thought at least of the English-speaking nations for the next generation. The principle of causality requires for every commencing phenomenon an adequate cause.

Hence the eternity of the universe has been an essential element of every atheistic scheme, since, if the universe had a beginning in finite time, it must have had some cause outside of itself. Theists were led naturally into the attempt to prove that the notion of the eternity of the cosmos, or of the matter which forms the substratum of the cosmos, was absurd. In the eighteenth century a vast amount of ingenuity was expended in very unconvincing metaphysical arguments directed to this end. Chalmers rejected these metaphysical arguments, and abandoned the attempt to disprove the eternity of matter. He proposed to base the argument for the existence of God purely on the collocations of matter. Matter may or may not be eternal. Certainly, the existing collocations of matter are not eternal, and the principle of causality requires a competent cause for the beginning of every collocation of matter. Chalmers emphasized especially the proof afforded by the new science of geology that all races of animals and plants now existing commenced within a period of time not only



finite but, in comparison with the whole duration of the earth, very short. It was indeed a bold and progressive theologian who was ready in 1835 to accept the teachings of geology at all. Hugh Miller, the inspired stone-cutter of Cromarty, followed in the footsteps of Chalmers, finding in "the testimony of the rocks" as to the history of life on this planet the sure proof of the existence of God. The naturalists of that day could see no natural process by which a new species could be originated. The words of Linnæus, the father of systematic zoology and botany, were accepted as the final utterance of science. *Species tot sunt quot diversas formas ab initio produxit Infinitum Ens.* There are so many species as, in the beginning, the Infinite Being produced diverse forms. If, then, the particular collocations of matter which formed the first individuals of any particular species had a definite beginning within finite time, they could have been produced only by the direct interposition of some power outside of the cosmos—that is, God. The atheist was, therefore,

supposed to be driven to the utterly unthinkable notion of an uncaused beginning.

No chain of reasoning is stronger than its weakest link, and we now know well enough what was the weak link in this pseudo-demonstration. That weak link, was, of course, the assumption that there is no natural process whereby the first individuals of a new species can appear. But a half-century ago we did not know how soon the chain would snap at that point. In the essay which I submitted forty-four years ago for the Olin Prize, I presented the Chalmers-Miller demonstration of the existence of God with no misgiving, and I fancied that atheism would be forever banished if mankind in general could really appreciate the truths of geology. There being no competitors, my essay took the prize, and I felt the satisfaction which a boy naturally feels in his own work. It seems strange now to think that I could have written that essay six years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. But the views of Darwin made converts very slowly in this country.

The opinions of Agassiz, a man really great but prodigiously overestimated, dominated the scientific and still more the semi-scientific thought of this country. Asa Gray was at that time almost the only naturalist of high repute in this country that accepted, even guardedly and with qualification, the theory of evolution. There was at that time, in the very scant curriculum of Wesleyan University, no formal teaching of biology, but there was a course in geology. I think I never heard the name of Darwin mentioned in any lecture room during my college course. Certainly I had never learned that Darwin had put the doctrine of evolution on any stronger foundation than was afforded by the premature speculations of Lamarck and the author of the *Vestiges of Creation*. Two years later I read the *Origin of Species* with profound admiration, but without full conviction. Time is an element in the formation of our opinions, and it was not until after the lapse of a few more years that I evolved into an evolutionist.

Of course the Chalmers-Miller demonstra-

tion of the existence of God is gone, and probably no one will ever again attempt a demonstration of the existence of God. Most thinkers on religious questions, I fancy, have come to the conclusion that it was no more a part of the divine plan for the moral development of humanity to secure right beliefs by making religious truths demonstrable, than to secure right conduct by making men automata. We have come to recognize that moral responsibility belongs to our opinions as well as to our conduct, and that "the will to believe" may be the supreme duty.

Of course I do not mean to deny the validity of the arguments for theism, and particularly of the argument from design in nature. Though making no approach to demonstration, the argument from design, as it may be reconstructed in adaptation to an evolutionary conception of nature, does establish a real probability for the existence of a personal God. Its stress must be laid not on particular details of adaptation, but on the general aspect of law and formu-



lable order pervading all nature—on that aspect of nature set forth in those striking words of Benjamin Peirce, “the intellectuality inwrought into the unconscious material world.” The book which we can read and understand we may reasonably infer was written by an intelligence kindred with our own.

But the acceptance of any conclusion sustained only by probable reasoning depends largely on subjective conditions. No man is likely to believe on merely probable evidence a proposition which too strongly antagonizes his own feelings and prejudices. To the pure and reverent mind the idea of Supreme Goodness as the all-pervading, all-animating soul of the universe appears intrinsically probable. But the soul that is too proud to adore anything, or too sensual to be in love with purity, sees no God in nature.

It is true, nevertheless, that many men of low moral tone and of vicious or criminal life have a traditional belief in the existence of God, about which they have never thought enough to doubt. Such merely traditional

faith, possessed of little value either intellectual or ethical, is very different from the vision of God which is the privilege of the pure in heart. Moreover, it must be said that the spiritual vision which belongs to the pure in heart does not necessarily involve an assent to a creed of dogmatic orthodoxy. Men may see God with a genuine spiritual vision, and commune with him in a life which is truly religious, though they may not call him by an orthodox name or formulate his attributes in the language of orthodox creeds. The Greek philosophers of highest ethical tone attained something like a practical monotheism, though holding, after a fashion, to the polytheism of the pagans around them; sometimes by investing Zeus in their thought with attributes far different from those attributed to him in the legends of popular mythology; sometimes by a semi-pantheistic conception of a substratum of deity, of which the popular gods were emanations or personifications. And, as there have been men pure in heart who, in some deep spiritual sense, have seen God in pagan

lands and times, so there are pure souls to-day who have, in some good degree, the vision of God, though they may be labeled by themselves and by others rather as pantheists or agnostics than as theists. There is wonderfully little difference between some of the theism and some of the atheism of our time. Every clear thinker must admit that, when we ascribe personality to God, we cannot mean exactly the same thing that we mean when we speak of personality in man. If we ascribe personality to God, we can mean, strictly speaking, nothing more than this—that in the nature of Him who dwells “in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see,” whose infinite being must of necessity transcend all finite comprehension, some phase finds its fittest symbol in personality as we know it in man. And there are men who have never felt that they could formulate their creed in the language which describes God as a person who yet cherish a truly religious reverence for that mysterious Power of which the material universe is the manifestation. Such men are



among the true worshipers of that God who reveals himself to the pure in heart. It is one who calls himself an agnostic who thus bears testimony to his religious experience: "At times in the silence of the night and in rare lonely moments, I experience a sort of communion of myself with Something Great that is not myself. Then the Universal Scheme of things has on me the effect of a sympathetic Person, and my communion therewith takes on a quality of fearless worship. These moments happen, and they are to me the supreme fact in my religious life."

If evolution has shattered the imaginary demonstration of God in which we trusted twoscore years ago, it has made possible for us a larger and nobler faith in God. Seeing no longer the evidence of God only in the supposed gaps in the continuity of nature, we are no longer trembling with hysterical fears lest the next new discovery of science may close some of those gaps, and obliterate the evidence of the existence of God. We have come to see God, not in the supposed



gaps in the continuity of nature, but in the continuity of nature itself—to find the very explanation of that continuity in the consistent activity of perfect wisdom and perfect goodness. And thus we have come back to the position of the old Hebrew bards and prophets who made no distinction between the natural and the supernatural in a world which, for them, was all divine. For us, all nature has grown sacred with the glory of immanent Deity.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and  
the plains—

Are not these, O Soul, the vision of Him who reigns?  
Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and Spirit with  
Spirit can meet—

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands  
and feet.

“God is law,” say the wise; O Soul, and let us  
rejoice,

For if he thunder by law, the thunder is yet his  
voice.

The pure in heart shall see God—in  
human life and history. They hear the uni-  
versal prayer which has ascended to the

Father of all, in every age,  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord;

and they feel that the universal religious aspiration, of which the universal prayer is the expression, is itself God's witness to mankind. They feel the pathos of that picture sketched for us in Paul's noble words on the slope of Areopagus, when he described all mankind as seeking God, "if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." They see how the idea of God has been the inspiration of every noblest word that man has spoken, and every noblest deed that man has done. If a Luther at Worms defies the power of church and empire, and wins intellectual and religious freedom for humanity, it is with an appeal to God on his lips. If a Lincoln writes those mighty words that break the fetters of a race of slaves, it is with a declaration that he has promised God to write those words. To the pure in heart the whole course of history

seems a continual exodus out of an Egypt of bondage and darkness to a promised land of liberty and light. The divine guidance would not seem more real if a pillar of cloud and fire visibly marked the path of progress. Even the seeming triumphs of evil have helped to work out the progress of good. Smithfield martyr fires and Saint Bartholomew massacres gave new vitality to the faith which they sought to destroy. The most damning crime of human history, the judicial murder of Jesus, gave to mankind the blessings of Christianity and Christian civilization. Broadly viewed, the history of mankind reveals a Power that makes for righteousness. The inference is a legitimate one, that this guidance of humanity in its progress to a higher life has been intelligent and purposeful. But, while that line of thought is profoundly impressive to the pure in heart, it makes little impression upon souls that are not in sympathy with ethical ideals.

The pure in heart shall see God—in the face of Jesus Christ. Biblical criticism, while

it has contradicted many traditional opinions in regard to the date and authorship of the books of the Bible, has pretty thoroughly established the early date of enough of the New Testament writings to show that the portrait of Jesus is virtually a contemporary portrait. The Jesus who went about doing good, who found life and taught his followers to find life in losing life, and in whose rebuke of sin the thunder of divine wrath blends in sweet accord with the wail of infinite pity, belongs not to the cloudland of myth and legend, but to the solid ground of history. Thus the character of Christ himself becomes not only the inspiration of Christian life and the center of Christian dogma, but also the foundation of Christian apologetics. The evidence of Christianity becomes far stronger than the evidence of simple theism.

But it is preeminently true that that evidence appeals in its convincing power only to the pure in heart. In his earthly life Jesus won to himself the Israelite in whom there was no guile, and the sinful woman through



whose tears of penitence shone the rainbow promise of a better life. But his message had no meaning for the Pharisee who devoured widows' houses and thanked God he was not as other men, for the Sadducean priest who plotted the murder of the guiltless because he deemed it expedient that one man should die for the people, or for the cynical Roman who thought any man who imagined that he had a mission to bear witness to the truth was a fanatical fool. And to-day that same majestic Character parts mankind on the right and on the left, "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

It must be said, however, that not all who thus see God in Christ accept the orthodox creeds in regard to Christ's personality. The poetic imagination of Richard Watson Gilder sings again the song of a heathen sojourning in Galilee, Anno Domini 32.

If Jesus Christ is a man—  
And only a man—I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to him,  
And to him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God—  
And the only God—I swear  
I will follow him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air.

A very Christian sort of heathen was he whose thought thus breathes itself again after the lapse of the centuries. And to-day many devout souls find in Christ the inspiration of a life of communion with God and consecration to God, who know not how to define their conception of Christ's personality. The Athanasian Creed, in its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, declares that there are not three incomprehensibles but one incomprehensible. One incomprehensible there certainly is, and that is the creed itself. There may be doubt as to the historic verity of the stories of the birth of Jesus in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke, and the dogmatic formulation of the hypostatical union of Deity and humanity may not commend itself as fully to the thought of our age as it did to the bishops assembled at Nicæa; but, however we may formulate or leave unformulated the moral

miracle of Christ's unique character, holy souls find in him the revelation of God, and through him draw near to the Father.

The pure in heart shall see God—in the events of their own lives. To them he is not merely the God of the astronomical spaces and the geological æons. They see God not alone in the vast system of natural law and the majestic march of evolution; not alone in the great movement of history, as down the ages

The eternal step of progress beats  
To that great anthem, calm and slow,  
Which God repeats.

They see God in the pettiest of individual experiences. The hairs of our heads are numbered; our little lives are ordered by God's care. The daily comforts of life are the gifts of Him who feeds the ravens and who clothes the lilies in beauty. In all earthly loves that gladden our lives—all sweet affections in the home, and all ennobling friendships—we may see new incarnations of the great love of the Heavenly

Father. And the pure in heart find it easy to see God in the dark things of life. They may cry with the hero of the majestic Hebrew drama, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Or with the sweet Christian poet of our own New England they may sing:

I dimly guess from blessings known  
Of greater out of sight,  
And, with the chastened psalmist, own  
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,  
For vanished smiles I long,  
But God hath led my dear ones on,  
And he can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak  
To bear an untried pain,  
The bruised reed he will not break,  
But strengthen and sustain.

The pure in heart shall see God—in the subjective experiences of their own souls.



And this not alone in peculiar and apparently supernatural experiences such as, if we may accept the record as literal history, fell to the lot of patriarchs and prophets and apostles. The theist must, of course, believe in the possibility of miracle. He cannot limit his conception of God's power by the boundaries of his own experience. He must recognize the possibility of revelations of truth and duty to individual souls in extraordinary methods. Yet no one can doubt that the Hebrew tendency to symbolism and personification has very largely shaped the scriptural representations of the religious experience of the ancient saints. None of us, I suppose, believes to-day that Jehovah literally walked in the garden in the cool of the day and engaged in conversation with Adam and Eve. The call of Abraham to journey westward from Ur of the Chaldees, and found a theocratic nation in the promised land beyond the Syrian desert, may not have been very different from the call of the Pilgrims of the Mayflower to found a Christian commonwealth in the new continent beyond

the Atlantic. The missionary call of Paul and Barnabas may not have been very different from that of Carey or Thoburn. And in the raptures and ecstasies of mediæval saints, like Francis of Assisi, it is not always easy to decide how much is divine and how much is pathological. The pure in heart will see God in the common experiences of the most prosaic type of religious life.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,  
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,  
No angel visitant, no opening skies;  
But take the dimness of my soul away.

Theodore Parker tells us, in an autobiographic fragment, how at the age of four he was tempted in boyish cruelty to kill a little spotted turtle. "But all at once," he says, "something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said clear and loud, 'It is wrong.' I hastened home, told the tale to my mother, and asked her what it was that told me it was wrong. She wiped a tear from her eye with her apron, and, taking me in her arms, said, 'Some men call it con-

science; but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man.' ” In that beautiful autobiographic passage in which George Albert Coe dedicates to his mother his “Religion of a Mature Mind,” he tells us: “A youth complained to his mother that his prayers contained no sure sense that God heard or would answer. The mother replied, ‘May not your impulse to pray be God’s manifestation of himself to you?’ ”

Every inmost aspiration is God’s angel undefiled,  
And in every, “O my Father,” slumbers deep a,  
“Here, my child.”

If thus we recognize the manifestation of God in the common experiences of the religious life, our bodies may become indeed the temples of the Holy Ghost, and in those temples the fire of the Shekinah need never die.

The pure in heart shall see God—in their own voluntary activities. In their lives will be fulfilled Paul’s precept, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Thus our busi-

ness may be not merely a *living*, a work by which we gain our livelihood; but a *calling*, a work in which we fulfill a divine call. Our Methodist fathers had a distorted and partial view of this truth when they held the idea of a divine call to the ministry in some unique and exclusive sense, and were not quite satisfied unless that call came through some more or less extraordinary and apparently preternatural experience. Every Christian life may be glorified by the faith that it is fulfilling a divine call. And thus all common toil may be transfigured, and made radiant with

. The light that never was on sea or land.

All days become holy, and all work becomes worship. Farm, factory, and mine, office, library, laboratory, and studio, become temples whence ascends in harmony a myriad-voiced anthem of praise to God.

The pure in heart shall see God—in the unknown world beyond the mystery of death. In the radiant dawn of youth, when



the earthly sky is bright with the promise of noon, there is little thought of "sunset and evening star." Eschatological musings form naturally a very small part of the religious life of a young man of good digestion and normal muscularity. But, when some of the ambitions and aspirations of youth have been transmuted into achievement, and more of them are dead and buried beyond hope of resurrection, when eye and ear are growing dim, and mental power and courage are failing, when the earthly future is limited to a few days or years of growing weakness, the hope of immortality assumes a profound significance. That hope is eminently the hope of the pure in heart. Undoubtedly, the strength of conviction of immortality which has characterized the Christian Church in all ages had its origin on the Easter morning in the faith that the Lord had risen. But, apart from that revelation whereby life and immortality were thus brought to light, the chief ground of belief in immortality is in the conviction that man is in some sense worthy to be immortal.

In those individuals and in those societies in which the ethical tone is the highest, there is, as a rule, the loftiest conception of the essential dignity of the human soul, and hence the strongest expectation of immortality. Those who have on earth the deepest sense of the divine companionship have the strongest faith that that companionship must be eternal.

Little indeed may we know of that life beyond the grave. The apocalyptic imagery affords little satisfaction to any curiosity which we may cherish in regard to that undiscovered country. It can only give us some vague suggestion of a glory of which gold and pearl, light and music—costliest and loveliest of earthly things—are the most fitting symbols. But it is at least a reasonable expectation that the great transition that awaits us will be a metamorphosis from an embryonic stage to a fuller and maturer life, and will bring to us some larger faculty for the discernment of spiritual truth. As Socrates, before drinking the hemlock, sat talking with his friends, he said that he ex-

pected to go to other gods both wise and good, and to men who have died who are better than those here. There may have been in his language some accommodation to polytheistic habits of thought and speech, as in his charge to Crito to pay his debt to Æsculapius. But we, like him, may hope to find in that future life the companionship of better men than we have known on earth, men who have, like ourselves, been born into that larger and fuller life—"the spirits of just men made perfect," "the general assembly and church of the first-born." Certainly, it is not for the companionship of other gods that we aspire, but for other and fuller manifestations of the God whom in part we have known on earth. "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."



Members of the graduating class: Four years you have been studying in this Christian college. You have found here no timid conservatism, no bigoted sectarianism, no narrow orthodoxy. There are people who are said to love their church more than Christianity, and Christianity more than truth. Not such has been the spirit of your teachers in Wesleyan University. You have been taught to prove all things, and to hold fast only that which is good. You have been taught to

Seek the truth, where'er 'tis found,  
On Christian or on heathen ground.

But your teachers have been men who, in nature, in human life, in history, in literature, have seen God. You have learned to recognize the whole material and moral universe as thrilling and pulsating with the life of immanent Deity. I pray you, recognize in the sphere of your own personal life the God who is immanent in the world around you. So for you may the joys of life be made more joyful, and the sorrows of life



be robbed of their bitterness, by trust in the all-embracing presence of Infinite Love. It were vain to wish that life for you may be all prosperous, but I may wish that your lives may glide on

. . . . Like rivers that water the woodlands,  
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an  
image of heaven.

Take God into the inmost sanctuary of personality; surrender your wills to him; keep the spirit ear ever attent to that "voice of gentle stillness" in which God speaks to the soul that is listening. The truest manliness is godliness; the completest self-surrender is the condition of the highest self-development. In God's service alone can you find perfect freedom. So, like the Master, may you find life in losing life; and, in whatever field and in whatever relations God may choose, may you serve your generation by the will of God. And so, beyond death's veil of mystery and terror, may yours be the gladness of the beatific vision. As in the name of Wesleyan University—your mother

and mine—I send you forth with her blessing upon you, I can breathe no better wish or prayer than that in your lives may be fulfilled those words of the Great Teacher, so simple and so profound, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

## V

THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE  
IN THEOLOGY

UNIVERSITY SERMON, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,  
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Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill.  
—Matt. v. 17.

JESUS gave to the ancient law of Israel a new interpretation which amounted to a radical transformation. Prohibitions of adultery and murder he transformed into prohibitions of lust and hate. The precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," which was open to the too obvious inference that one might hate people who were not his neighbors, Jesus expanded into a command of love universal as that of the Heavenly Father. The permission of divorce on the ground of incompatibility he affirmed was

granted only on account of the hardness of men's hearts, and he pronounced it contrary to the eternal principles of morality. In declaring that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," he subordinated ritual observance to human need and convenience. He destroyed the foundation of the elaborate distinctions between clean and unclean meats, declaring "that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him," thus "making all meats clean." No wonder that to conservative literalists his teaching seemed destructive of laws and institutions which were believed to have been given by Jehovah himself amid the thunders of Sinai. But the world sees now that Jesus rightly estimated his own work when he declared, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." The ethical and religious truth revealed to ancient seers and lawgivers he freed from the errors that had been associated with it, and invested with a higher and deeper significance. He transformed dead law into living principle.

What took place in regard to the teach-



ing of Jesus has taken place in all ages in regard to the announcement of new truth. Every new truth at its first promulgation has seemed to involve the destruction of beliefs and customs and institutions consecrated by the reverence of ages; but the new truth has in time coordinated itself with all that was good and true in the thought and life of the ages past.

The latter half of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth are most eminently characterized in the intellectual history of mankind by the immense progress in the knowledge of the universe. In manifold ways science has rendered our life more comfortable and convenient. But the contributions which science makes to our physical well-being are the lesser share of the benefits which it confers upon us. The half-century of which we speak has given as its greatest boon to mankind the intellectual treasure of a new view of nature. It has given a clear vision of that great truth of the unity of nature, the first glimpse of which was gained in Newton's discovery of

universal gravitation. In the theories of evolution and conservation of energy that truth has found its consummation.

To those who believe that the material universe is but the vesture of immanent Deity, every scientific discovery is in the truest sense a revelation of God. A half-century ago it was widely believed that the new scientific doctrines were destructive of religious faith, and even of the foundation of ethics. To-day we are able to see that God's great revelation in science came not to destroy, but to fulfill. Our theme then, to-night, is the influence of science in theological belief and religious life.

In considering the changes of theological belief wrought in a scientific age we must recognize two ways in which the influence of science has been exerted. Scientific discoveries and their corollaries have involved logical contradictions of some beliefs commonly held in the Christian world a half-century ago; but the scientific spirit, which questions the credentials of time-hallowed tradition, which seeks to prove all things and

is willing to hold fast only what can accredit itself as good, has brought into question beliefs on subjects which do not come into immediate contact with the field of natural science.

Some changes in theological belief are, accordingly, not the direct effect of scientific discoveries, but rather the effect of the intellectual tendencies which were the cause of those discoveries. Yet this distinction is not as sharp as at first sight appears, for it is probably true that scientific discoveries have in large degree created the spirit and developed the methods of science. Men do not learn to swim before going into the water. The scientific method was not developed in advance of scientific investigation, but has been developed in the progress of investigation. In very large degree, therefore, the intellectual habits of our age which have necessitated revision and reconstruction of religious belief are the effects of the great scientific ideas which made their advent into the intellectual life of man in the middle of the nineteenth century.



The discoveries of science have radically changed our conception of the authority upon which theology rests. A half-century ago Christianity was commonly spoken of as the religion of the Bible. Although many eminent theologians, alike in patristic time and in the age of the Reformation, had admitted that the Bible may contain somewhat of error, the belief in its inerrancy was completely dominant in popular religious thought in the middle of the nineteenth century. We see plainly enough now that no scientific discoveries were needed to prove that some statements in the Bible are erroneous, for the narratives of the Bible contain numerous contradictions. But it is doubtless true that the discoveries of science forced upon mankind a clearer recognition of error in the Scripture than had been possible before. The story of the creative days cannot be harmonized with the history of the earth and of the universe as that history is revealed by geology and astronomy. The Eden story is no more historic in its Hebrew than in its Babylonian form. We may be



sure that the Noachian Deluge did not cover the whole earth, and there is no probability that it was universal as regards the human race. Perhaps the most trenchant contradiction between the Bible and science was presented by the discoveries proving for the human race an antiquity far beyond the received chronology. The chronology of pre-Abrahamic time rests on two genealogical tables, in which the age of each father is given at the time of the birth of his first-born son. The summation of these numbers gives us the time from Adam to Abraham. Now, a number can have only one meaning. A statement of the age of a father at the time of the birth of his first-born son is not metaphor or allegory. It is either true or false. The proof of the antiquity of man involved, therefore, the most trenchant contradiction of the dogma of the inerrancy of Scripture.

But we did not at first appreciate the momentous consequences to which the abandonment of that doctrine would lead. It was a great convenience to be saved from the

necessity of finding some device to harmonize the two different narratives of the relation between Saul and David. It was quite a relief not to have to believe that Methuselah did live nine hundred and sixty-nine years. But, when our eyes were really opened, we could not fail to see that the errors of the Bible are not limited to trifling details or to matters of no religious importance. There is not only bad history and bad science, but bad ethics and bad theology in the Bible. The ethics of the book of Esther is not that of the Sermon on the Mount, and the war-God of Joshua is not the God whose face of fatherly love we behold in the revelation of Jesus. Still we found, for a time, a resting place in the doctrine of a progressive revelation, reaching its culmination in the New Testament. The theology of the New Testament, we thought, we could trust as an infallible revelation. But soon we learned that we had not reached the end of the journey, but only a transient halt, for it became increasingly obvious that the men of the apostolic age were not in agreement in

their theological conceptions. The sacrificial conception of the atonement in the Epistle to the Hebrews is not the same as the forensic conception in Paul's epistles, and neither is the same as John's ethical and mystical conception of a spiritual life imparted to the soul in communion with Christ. We find in the New Testament not one theology but the germs of several theologies; and we find ourselves driven to the conclusion that the theology of the first century was no more infallible than the theology of the fifth or the sixteenth or the twentieth century. Nor can we even fall back upon the words attributed in the Gospels to Jesus himself as absolutely inerrant. There are real differences of meaning between the reports of the words of Jesus in parallel passages of the different Gospels. As Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, and our earliest record of his words is in Greek, that record is at best founded on the translation of a memory. We find no *ipsissima verba* of which we can predicate absolute inerrancy.

Thus we are led to a pretty radical change



in our conception of the authority upon which theology rests. Christianity to us is no longer the religion of the Bible but the religion of Christ. Not through a book but through a person did God reveal himself. In the Gospels we have the historic record of the life and character and teaching of Jesus—not an inerrant record, but yet a record whose essential historic verity we can trust. The picture of Jesus in the Gospels is no fancy sketch of saintly romancers, no slowly growing myth. That picture was painted from life. The heart of the Bible is the historic Jesus. The Old Testament, then, becomes the record of an age-long preparation for the coming of Christ in the life of the Hebrew people. The Acts and the Epistles exhibit the Christ-life reincarnated in the life of humanity. The Christ-life could not exist in the world without becoming the subject of thought. The human intellect must try to formulate the meaning of the new power which was transforming the old sin-cursed world into a kingdom of heaven. Profoundly interesting and inspir-



ing are the views of the meaning of Christianity which presented themselves to the companions of Jesus and the leaders of the early church; but not to Paul nor John nor any other in the apostolic age was it given to develop a perfect and inerrant theology.

The two main subjects with which theology must deal are God and man, and the scientific discoveries of our age have wrought great changes in our thought on both these subjects.

The popular theology of a half-century ago held the deistic conception of an absentee God. God made the universe a few thousand years ago, as a man might make a clock, and then left the machine to run. The Christianity of that time differed from deism in supposing that God had not got so far away from the universe that he could not return to it on occasion. So, while the ordinary course of nature was looked upon as godless, God was seen in events that were extraordinary and inexplicable. Such events occurring within the range of human history

were called special providences or miracles, according to the degree in which they seemed to depart from ordinary experience. The origins of the earth and man were, of course, believed to be inexplicable and therefore divine. In general, God was to be seen in the supposed breaks in the continuity of nature.

The supreme result of scientific study has been to fill the supposed gaps in the continuity of nature. The doctrine of evolution, in particular, is nothing more nor less than the doctrine that the law of continuity extends through the whole history of nature, and includes the origin of the earth itself and of its living population.

No wonder that the scientific discoveries that stopped the gaps in which the popular theology had seen its evidences of God were regarded with almost frantic terror and abhorrence by multitudes of devout souls. But the world has learned that in its revelation of the extension of law throughout the universe science came not to destroy but to fulfill. We have lost the "carpenter God"

who built a universe and left it to itself; we have gained an immanent God, the soul of a universe which we have come to regard as a growth and not as a building. Thus has come back to us, other and yet the same, the indwelling God whose glory was seen in the heavens and whose voice was heard in the thunder by Hebrew bards and seers.

Evolution, astronomical, geological, biological, gives us a continuity of law and of process from the nebula to the world of to-day. But, as our vision penetrates the abysses of a past eternity, we cannot fail to ask, Whence came the nebula? The Laplacean form of the nebular theory gave us, indeed, a nebula so simple and homogeneous that at first we were satisfied to take it as a beginning. But that stage of thought was only a temporary one, for, in conceiving of the nebula as a beginning, we were making the same mistake as that of the old theologians who asserted that God created seeds and not full-grown plants, forgetting that the seed is a product of growth as truly as the plant which produced it. Moreover, in



that form of the nebular theory which seems to be coming into general belief at present, the nebula is conceived as resulting from the partial disintegration of a sun already existing. Thus we are led to a conception of evolution, in which progress and degeneration, growth and decay, life and death, go hand in hand from eternity to eternity. No longer can we think of a beginning. We must think, rather, of creative power and creative intelligence as eternally immanent in an eternal universe. Theology may well welcome a doctrine which rids us of the awkward notion of a benevolent Deity spending an eternity in solitude and idleness before he resolved to create a universe. And, surely, thus we come to a deeper sense of the sublime truth in the words of the Master, "My Father worketh hitherto."

A half-century ago it was believed that man was created about six thousand years ago, and at his creation possessed a high intellectual and moral character. A theologian of the seventeenth century declared that "an Aristotle was only the rubbish of



an Adam." From that supernal elevation, man was precipitated into an abyss of intellectual degradation and moral ruin by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Now we have come to regard man as the result of a long process of evolution. Surely, there has been no such catastrophe as was pictured in the old doctrine of the fall. There is indeed a profound moral truth in the Eden legend. The fall was not actual, but potential; not degradation from a supernal glory once possessed, but forfeiture of glorious possibilities which humanity might have realized but for the fact of sin. The conception of depravity inherited from Adam is a symbol of the truth that we are tempted to sin by the instincts and passions inherited from generations of pre-human ancestors, and by the evil tendencies involved in our biological and social inheritance from generations of human ancestors.

But the changes in theology which are characteristic of an age of science are not limited to those doctrines which are logically

contradicted by scientific discoveries. The spirit of science demands a reconstruction of much of the popular theology of a half-century ago. We cannot fail to notice that much of that theology rests upon an unsound foundation. It was based on the assumption that the Bible is at least practically inerrant—that the inspiration given at least to the writers of the New Testament was such in kind and degree as to make their theological teachings infallible. This, as we have seen, can no longer be maintained. But the popular theology involved still more vicious misconceptions of the Bible. Doctrines were supported by isolated passages quoted as proof-texts, and these proof-texts were taken indifferently from the New Testament and from the Old, without any literary sense of the meaning of the words as interpreted by their connections and their relation to the time and place and personality of their authors. Metaphors were stiffened into dogmas. Theology must be anthropomorphic, for we can think of the Divine only in terms of

the human. But the type of anthropomorphism involved in the old popular theology was determined largely by the social and political institutions and the habits of thought of a bygone age. God is often conceived of as an Oriental autocrat, more sensitive in regard to his own prerogative than in regard to ethical distinctions. It is difficult not to suspect here and there the influence of conceptions derived from pagan mythology. Some representations of the Trinity seem essentially polytheistic.

For a scientific age there is no meaning in the subtleties of the Athanasian Creed, declaring that the Father is "neither created nor begotten," that the Son is "not made nor created but begotten," and that the Holy Ghost is "neither made nor created nor begotten but proceeding"; and we care not to-day for the one dogmatic difference between the Greek and the Latin Church on the question whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father only or from the Father and the Son. We have gone back rather to something like the



faith of the early Christians before the beginning of the theological evolution which culminated in the Athanasian Creed. "Belief in Father, Son, and Spirit, all divine," says William Newton Clarke, "was light, not darkness, to the eyes of the early Christians. The Divine Son had been among them, the Divine Spirit dwelt in them, and by both the Divine Father was made real to them. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and God by the Spirit was revealing himself and giving life to men. This was their Trinity."

The consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, the hypostatic union of divine and human in the person of Christ, the eternal generation of the Son, seem to us to-day, like the subtle formulations of the Trinity, a darkening of counsel by words without knowledge. When Christ is called the Son of God, and when we ourselves are called the sons of God, the language in each case is figurative; and an exact and complete interpretation of the figure is beyond our power. It is clear enough that Jesus claimed



for himself, and the general consensus of Christian thought in all ages has accorded to him, in some sense, a unique relation to God. He is not simply the wisest of the sages, the holiest of the saints, but something transcendent. The saying of John, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure"; and the declaration of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son,"<sup>1</sup> seem to suggest that, while to saint and seer, to lawgiver and prophet and apostle, the Divine Spirit came with limited and partial revelation of truth, there came to Jesus a revelation of God whose full-orbed completeness differs from all other revelations as the infinite from the finite. Surely, Christian thought recognizes to-day, as in the ages past, Christ Jesus as the one supreme Revealer, in whom and through whom we behold the Father, though we may

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews i. 1, 2 (Revised Version).

not definitely formulate the mystery of his personality. The Christ in whom the ages have trusted abides with us.

Not the Christ of our subtle creeds,  
But the Lord of our hearts, of our homes,  
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs;  
The brother of want and blame,  
The lover of women and men,  
With a love that puts to shame  
All passions of mortal ken;  
Before whose face do fly  
Lies, and the love of a lie.  
'Tis he, as none other can,  
Makes free the spirit of man,  
And speaks, in darkest night,  
One word of awful light—  
That word divine which brought  
The universe from naught.

Surely we cannot to-day conceive of divine justice as demanding the penalty for a broken law, but absolutely indifferent as to whether the penalty be borne by the guilty or the innocent. In our human legislation definite penalties are assigned for particular actions, irrespective of the state of mind of the criminal; and that crude perversion of

justice has its reason in the ignorance which cannot read the hearts of our fellow-men, and in the weakness which compels us to inflict penalty for the protection of society. But God is under no such limitations. He knows the hearts of his children, and can never be deceived by sham repentance and vain promises of reformation; and he who upholds the universe by the word of his power is under no necessity of inflicting penalty to maintain the stability of his government. The more intelligent and humane practice of the present day is, in some degree, getting rid of this perversion of justice. There is a growing tendency, by the indefinite sentence, by the system of parole, and by time allowance for good behavior, to substitute for definite penalties a treatment of men according to their character. We are bound to think of God as better than our best. Thus we come to the thought that God's justice is not retributive but distributive—that its principle is not reward for good action and penalty for evil action, but a treatment of men according to their char-

acter. We can no longer accept as literal truth the picture of an assembled universe and a parting of mankind on the right and on the left. Rather we think of the continuous, ever-present judgment which is so characteristic a conception in the Gospel of John. Now and ever stands the Christ before mankind, and day by day we are taking our places on the right or on the left. Heaven and hell are not localities but mental states. Those whose character places them in hell are there on an indefinite sentence.

As our conception of divine justice changes from a forensic to an ethical basis, we recognize the deceptiveness of any hope that we can escape the consequences of sin. Every act leaves its eternal trace upon character, and there is thus an eternal punishment from which there can be no redemption.

Only in a figurative sense can Christ be said to have borne our punishment. There can be no transfer of guilt. There are no legal fictions in the court of heaven, and God has not incurred his own curse pro-



nounced upon them that call evil good and good evil. Yet no less real is the faith of the church in our reconciliation to God through the life and death of Christ Jesus. The divine love revealed in self-sacrifice brings the sinful soul to repentance, wherein begins a new spiritual life. And through the ages goes on the fulfillment of Christ's great prophecy: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."

Will that prophecy ever find its complete fulfillment? Will all men some time yield to the mighty attraction of the cross? Alas! we know not. There is no self-limiting power in sin, like the self-limitation of a zymotic disease. We know the dreadful law of our nature, that acts repeated harden into habit and habit crystallizes into character. We recognize the fearful solemnity of Christ's warning of the danger of "eternal sin."<sup>1</sup> And yet we are sure that there can be no arbitrary limit to the divine mercy. Probation and retribution are not sharply limited by the fact of death, but are con-

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 29 (Revised Version).

comitant phases of moral life. To-day is retribution for yesterday and probation for to-morrow. As, in the age-long education which has lifted our race from bestiality to humanity, and in the lifelong discipline of mingled joy and pain by which the Heavenly Father seeks to perfect his children in righteousness, we behold

The patience of immortal love,  
Outwearying mortal sin,

we cherish an inextinguishable hope.

All souls are thine; the wings of morning bear  
None from that presence which is everywhere,  
Nor hell itself can hide, for thou art there.

Through sins of sense, perversities of will,  
Through doubt and pain, through guilt and shame  
and ill,  
Thy pitying eye is on thy creature still.

Wilt thou not make, Eternal Source and Goal!  
In thy long years, life's broken circle whole,  
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?

But the scientific spirit leads not only to the rejection or modification of particular

dogmatic statements; it affects broadly our intellectual attitude in regard to all beliefs. There are two characteristics of the scientific habit of mind, closely allied but not identical, which may be called, respectively, the skeptical and the critical tendency.

The skeptical spirit feels strongly the limitations of our knowledge, the fallibility of our mental processes, and the inevitable uncertainty of our conclusions. It regards all beliefs as in some sense provisional. We hold no belief to-day which we are not willing to abandon to-morrow. Our scientific theories we hold simply as the best interpretation we can now give of the facts which we now know; but further investigation may reveal new facts, and further contemplation may put old facts in a new light. The same spirit inevitably influences our religious thinking. As in science we shape provisional interpretations of known facts into working hypotheses, in regard to which only the future can show whether they will be built into the temple of truth which is slowly being reared or be cast away as rubbish, so we hold

our religious beliefs not as absolute and final truth, but as a creed by which we can live. Whether our children can live by the same creed we do not know.

Closely allied to the skeptical tendency of scientific thought is what I have called the critical tendency. The critical spirit is distrustful of extreme and unqualified statements. Most rules have exceptions. Sharp lines of demarcation are not generally present in a universe which is a product of evolution. We always expect to find a certain percentage of white blackbirds. A good many years ago some of us in Judd Hall adopted a logical dictum which we often repeated to each other: "All universal propositions are false." It did not at all disturb us that our dictum was a universal proposition, and that we had put ourselves somewhat in the position of the Cretan poet who declared that all Cretans were liars. There are few controversies in which the right is all on one side. Very few things are black or white. Most things are gray.

These two characteristics of scientific



thought have profoundly influenced not only religious thinking, but also religious life. They keep before our minds the probability that our own religious beliefs are not absolute truth but only approximations to the truth, and the possibility that others may be nearer the truth than ourselves. The spirit of sectarianism has its ground in the fact that the adherents of each sect have assumed that they are in possession of the absolute truth of God and that therefore all other sects must be enemies of the truth. The influence of a humane civilization may disincline men to the violent forms of persecution which prevailed in earlier times. But, so long as any church believes that it and it alone has the absolute truth, intolerance is a duty. That church cannot rejoice in the increase of the membership and influence of other churches. Hence comes the waste of money and toil in useless competition. Hence the unedifying spectacle, in many a village, of a half-dozen little churches each starving its pastor and starved itself. The frank recognition on the part of all that our

beliefs are only provisional, and that the beliefs of others may be nearer right than our own, opens the way for cooperation and federation.

But is federation the goal, or only a stage in our progress? One flock,<sup>1</sup> not one fold, is the prophecy of Jesus; and there may be spiritual union without ecclesiastical union. Surely, there cannot be in the future, any more than in the past, uniformity in belief or in practice. Yet one cannot but hope that there may be one great church, tolerant of the widest diversity of belief which may be associated with genuinely Christian life, holding a confession of faith expressive of Christian trust and aspiration rather than of definite dogma, or retaining ancient creeds as historic monuments, without requiring definite subscription to them, and so flexible in its organization as to allow different congregations the widest diversity in modes of worship—from the stately cathedral service with surpliced priests and vested choirs to the audacious unconvention-

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<sup>1</sup> John x. 16 (Revised Version).

ality of the Salvation Army. But, though we know not what the form of fulfillment may be, we are surely moving toward a fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus for his disciples, "that they may all be one."

The recognition that our creeds of to-day are not absolute and eternal truth but only more or less close approximations to the truth, prepares us to feel a real brotherhood not only with other Christians of our own time but also with Christians of all time. As we fix our vision less intently on details of dogma, we see more clearly the broad outlines of the faith which has been held by the church in all the ages. With the tolerance of a historic outlook we recognize the value of the contributions to Christian thought and life from Christians of every age and every land and every sect. We clasp hands of fellowship with saints who persecuted each other, and who would certainly have persecuted us if we had lived in their time. We sing the hymns of Trinitarian and Unitarian, of Catholic and Lutheran and Puritan, of Anglican and Methodist and Quaker;



and we are not particular to edit those hymns into dogmatic uniformity. There is no discord in the chorus of holy song. Few of us to-day believe in all the clauses of the so-called Apostles' Creed in the exact sense that the words bore when first written. But most of us love to repeat the formula in which for fifteen centuries Christians of every land and every name have declared their faith in a Heavenly Father, a crucified and risen Saviour, a sanctifying Spirit, a fellowship of saints militant and saints triumphant, and a life eternal.

As we recognize thus the unity of the church in ages past, we look forward with confidence to a like unity in the ages to come. Opinions, usages, politics, have changed and will change; but the spirit abides. The world outgrows other religions; it grows in Christianity. Christianity has adapted itself to the variety of intellectual environment through all changes of knowledge and opinion, from the first century to the twentieth. It has seen the flat earth roll itself into a spheroid, and the lamps of heaven



transform themselves into mighty worlds at measureless distances. It has seen the few thousand years of a traditional chronology stretch themselves into a past eternity. It has seen the chaos of phenomena organize itself into the unity of law which finds expression in the doctrines of evolution and conservation of energy. The religion which has survived through all these stupendous changes may be expected to live as long as humanity endures. We may be confident that in all the ages good men and women will delight to profess and call themselves Christians; not in the vague sense in which all phases of our civilization are sometimes called Christian, but as cherishing the ideas and ideals given to mankind by Christ Jesus. As long as humanity survives, men will worship a Heavenly Father revealed through Jesus, our Brother and our Lord. The Divine Spirit will work in their hearts that conviction of sin and righteousness in which a holy life is born. The divine love revealed in self-sacrifice will bind their souls in fellowship with the Father and with his Son

Jesus Christ. In the spirit of the Master they will find life in losing life. They will do and dare, they will suffer and die, for God and man, in holy gladness, delivered from the bondage of law into the liberty of filial love. For them to live will be Christ and to die will be gain. The words of the creed are prophecy as well as history—"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

Almost fifty years ago I visited for the first time the Cathedral of Cologne. I had that day the companionship of one whose name is honored in Wesleyan—Fales Henry Newhall. O how we boys of '65 loved him! Many of you have seen the cathedral in its finished beauty. Different was its aspect when I first beheld it. The spires had not yet risen; on the crumbling top of one tower weeds and shrubbery were growing; on the other tower the work of construction was going on. In various parts of the building stone work which had decayed in centuries of weathering was being removed and replaced by more durable material. We hardly knew whether we were looking at the frag-

ment of a new temple or the ruin of an old one. But within the cathedral the services of the Roman ritual were being celebrated as they had been for more than five hundred years. The white clouds of incense were rising, and the voice of prayer and Christian song soaring heavenward, mingling with the ring of hammer and the click of trowel. But the seer who was my companion saw more that day than I could see, and I will tell you his thought, though mine be not his words of music. To him the cathedral was a symbol of the temple of Christian truth which God is rearing, and the chanted hymns and prayers to which we listened were a symbol of the worship of the church universal. So stands to-day the temple of Christian truth. Parts of it seem crumbling into decay; in other parts goes on the work of construction. And, as we know not what is the Christian faith of our own time, and know still less what will be the Christian faith of centuries to come, we hardly know whether we are in the fragment of a new faith or the ruin of an old one. But there

are some parts of the temple which are fit for our use to-day. There let us worship, as saintly souls have worshiped in ages past and will worship in ages to come. Let our prayers and our songs of praise soar heavenward, mingling with the ring of hammer and the click of trowel. Slowly the work goes on, the vistas lengthen, the arches rise, the spires climb skyward. Some time the temple will be finished; and wiser and better men than we on earth, and spirits blessed and glorified in heaven, will gaze in rapture on its serene and awful beauty.













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